

**Cultural Scripts for Learning in an Intercultural Higher
Education Context: A Narrative Approach**

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Abstract

The thesis focuses on how international students make sense of their experience of learning in an intercultural context of Higher Education in a Post Graduate Institute of Education in London. It addresses the way the different cultures students bring into pedagogic situations shape their learning and interpretations of intercultural pedagogy. The concept of cultural scripts in the thesis reflects the ways of understanding which a person has developed, and also the person's action and meaning in context. I define culture as the collection of stories people tell about themselves, about living and their meanings.

The thesis adopts a social constructivist view of constructing knowledge. I conduct active interviews with thirty international students, sampling particular situations using an opportunity sample to identify learners' scripts from their understandings about their experience of learning in a British University. Constructivist grounded theory is employed to make sense of the stories of the respondents.

Significant cultural scripts emerged under the following headings; activities for learning; talking, reading and thinking for learning, and role relations and interactions for learning. Self reflexivity and respondents' meta-narratives that are used to make meaning of the major themes explain varying versions of identity, nature of epistemology and versions of power embedded in learning. These versions reflect learning as a cultural-political construct, which encapsulates difference rather than a neutral process of acquiring knowledge.

I argue that silence regarding cultural differences in multicultural contexts of Education results in misinterpretations of alternative ways of learning as deficit approaches, creating difficulties for the institutions and students. This thesis suggests that engaging in intercultural dialogue, accepting cultural difference as a resource, rather than a problem, could lead to illuminated intercultural pedagogies, which benefit both the institutions and the international students in intercultural contexts.

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I begin with my supervisor. I am ever grateful to Chris Watkins, my supervisor, who enormously illuminated and facilitated my sojourn of doing this thesis. He is remembered with much respect for initiating and guiding me to make sense of doing life and learning in a novel manner.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and to the memory of my dear father who helped me live rich narratives of life by introducing me to a world of books and to my teacher Chris Watkins who intellectually illuminated my life by talking novel and alternative stories of going about life and learning.

Declaration and Word Count

I hereby declare that, except for where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

The word count (exclusive of appendices and the list of references) is 76,495.

Thushari Champa Welikala.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction to the Inquiry	1
	1.1: Pianos and Drums: Different Stories of Learning	4
	1.2 Similar Stories about Difference: Learning and Culture	12
	1.3: Essence of the Inquiry	16
Chapter 2	Culture and Cultural Scripts	22
	2.1: The Notion of Culture	22
	2.1.1: The Development of the Notion of Culture	26
	2.1.2: Culture as Socially Constructed	29
	2.1.3: Culture as Contextual Meanings	34
	2.1.4: Storied Meanings and Culture	37
	2.2: The Concept of Cultural Scripts	41
	2.2.1: Cultural Scripts in Education	45
	2.2.2: Cultural Scripts for Learning	48
Chapter 3:	Culture, Learning and Different Cultural Scripts: Stances in Literature	51
	3.1: Seeing the Borders: West and the Rest	54
	3.2: Contexts of Intercultural Learning and Culture	87
	3.3: Seeing the Border and Crossing it	102
Chapter 4	Approaches to the Inquiry and Methodologies	106
	4.1: Why Narrative?	106
	4.1.1: Storying Man	108

	4.2: Constructed Worlds	112
	4.2.1: Multiple Realities	116
	4.3: Grounded Theory: an Applicable Version	118
	4.3.1: Representing the Empirical Worlds	121
	4.3.2: Flexible and Durable	124
	4.3.3: Constructivist Grounded Theory	128
	4.4: Active Interviewing	130
	4.4.1: What is Active Interviewing?	131
	4.4.2: Meaning in Context	136
	4.4.3: Joint construction of Meaning	140
	4.4.4: Multiple Voices: Stories Comprehensible Locally	142
	4.5: Opportunity Sampling	145
	4.6: Plausible Stories: Which Criteria Matter?	148
	4.6.1: Subjectively Objective, Trustworthy, Multiple Truths	150
Chapter 5	Talking Stories: Constructing Knowledge with Respondents	157
	5.1: Approaching Respondents	157
	5.1.1: Addressing Ethical Issues	158
	5.1.2: A Researcher from No Where? A Fellow Student?	161
	5.2: Assembling Knowledge Interactively	170
	5.2.1: Tell Me a Story: Starting Interview Conversations	171
	5.2.2: Playing My Part: Which Bits Matter?	175
	5.2.3: Active Co-authoring: Reflexive Note on Interviewing	184
	5.3: Cyclical Sense Making	196
Chapter 6:	Cultural Scripts	202
	(1) Activities for Learning	202

6.1: Cultural Scripts of Talking for Learning	204
6.1.1: Topsy-Turvy: Teacher Listening, Student Talking!	205
6.1.2: Arguing with the Guru?	218
6.1.3: We are Only Self Critical	224
6.1.4: Absolutes and Alternatives	229
6.2: Cultural Scripts for Writing for Learning	232
6.2.1: Beating Around the Bush	233
6.2.2: Please Smile Carolina	237
6.2.3: Critical Reviewing as Personal Attack	241
6.2.4: Just Reproducing the Note	249
6.3: Cultural Scripts for Reading for Learning	254
6.3.1: Scanning Means Fabricating	254
6.3.2: Reading is Getting Information	257
6.4: Cultural Scripts for Thinking for Learning	261
6.4.1: The Gospel Truth	262
6.4.2: Vocal Thinking and Critical Thinking	267
 Chapter 7	
Cultural Scripts	
(2) Role Relations for Learning	273
7.1: Cultural Scripts for Teacher-Student Role Relations	
A Matter of Distance?	273
7.1.1.: Moral Distance	274
7.1.2: Power Distance	282
7.1.3: Close Distance	288
7.1.4: When Mohammad can not Find the Mountain	292
7.1.5: Changing Nature of Distance	299
7.1.6: What is Theatre there is Classroom Here!	301

	7.2: Cultural Scripts for Peer Interactions for Learning	306
	7.2.1: Interaction as Bonus	307
	7.2.2: Interaction as “Losing Face”	311
Chapter 8	Illuminating Cultural Scripts and the Dynamics of Encountering Difference	315
	8.1: Contextualizing Stories: Taking One Step Back	315
	8.2: Reflexive Respondents Positioning Themselves in a Wider Picture	323
	8.2.1 Knowledge and Power	324
	8.2.2: Expert Teachers and Novice Learners	328
	8.2.3: Knowledge: Finding a Way through Life	330
	8.3: Learner Positioning When Encountering Difference	331
	8.3.1: Keeping the Native Voice	333
	8.3.2: Doing What Romans Do	336
	8.3.3.: Acting as Someone Else	338
	8.3.4.: Standing Outside One’s Own Bigger Picture	341
	8.4: Learner Positioning When Encountering Cultural Scripts Encounter Institutional Stories	344
	8.4.1: Stories they Tell and Stories They Live	345
	8.5: Illuminating Issues: Power, Identity and Knowledge	351
	8.5.1: Identity Issues in Intercultural Contexts of learning	352
	<i>Identity as Narrative Rendering of Self</i>	352
	<i>Varying Versions of Learner Self</i>	355
	8.5.2: Nature of Knowledge and Intercultural Contexts of Learning	364
	<i>Different Versions of Knowledge in Different Cultures</i>	368
	<i>Themes Stemming from Varying Versions of Epistemology</i>	379

	8.5.3: Different Versions of Power in Intercultural Contexts of Learning	382
Chapter 9	(1) Implications and Limitations	407
	9.1: Revisiting the Themes Emerged	408
	9.1.1: Learner Identities	411
	9.1.2: Living Alternative Epistemologies	412
	9.1.3: History Repeated?	415
	9.1.4: Canaries in the Coal Mine?	420
	9.1.5: Keeping Home Behind	422
	9.1.6: Tissue Rejection in Culture Transplant?	426
	9.2: Limitations	432
References		438
Appendices		464

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Inquiry

This introductory chapter outlines the context and the concepts that frame this thesis. I make use of reflections of personal experience as a teacher educator in Sri Lanka, and as a student in a British University to highlight why and how this research area became so significant to me that it provided me with a platform to build up an inquiry.

I thus begin to narrate the story of my inquiry with the following reflection.

I was reluctant to read out the second stanza of the poem “The Fisherman Mourned by his Wife” which has been a prescribed poem for the second year English Teacher Education course in Teacher Education Colleges in Sri Lanka. However, I managed to read it and my students seemed to have been deeply engaged in listening.

“ ...,

...,

“It was not love that married us nor affection,

But elders’ persuasion, not even loneliness

...,

My eyes were open in the dark unlike in love,

Trembling, lest in fear, you’ll let me go a maid,

Trembling on the other hand, for my virginity.”

From: The Fisherman Mourned by his Wife

by Patrick Fernando (Wijesinghe, 1991:37).

This stanza has been taken from a poem which dramatises the reflections of a Sri Lankan woman of her relationship with her husband who is dead. These particular lines delineate how she recalls her experience of living the first night with the husband of her arranged marriage. This stanza epitomises the inner emotional agony experienced by the girl who is surrounded by certain social norms and traditions in relation to love, life and marriage. On the one hand, she is afraid of the pain of losing her virginity. On the other hand, she is afraid of going a maid since she has to prove her

parents and the parents- in-law, the following day that she had been a virgin.

Being young and unmarried I found it difficult and embarrassing to discuss the theme of the poem with my adult students. I noticed my students murmuring and passing quiet comments among each other in a very low tone. I saw a boy in the first row trying to cover up his laughter by closing his mouth with both his palms while most of the girls were silent.

All these responses were expected before I started the lesson that day. We discussed the thematic and the social-emotional aspects in relation to the poem. However, neither the students nor I talked about the second stanza I have written above in depth. Almost all the students seemed to have got into a specific type of tranquillity. I felt the eloquence of their tranquillity in their eyes which were pregnant with emotions and ideas.

Suddenly, Kamal stood up and started to say something.

“Madame,”

“Yes Putha?” (Son) I asked with difficulty.

The next second I saw him sitting down saying, “Well...nothing Madame”. I was relieved.

This episode occurred in the year 1995 while teaching Literature in English in a Teacher Education College in Sri Lanka. This particular experience as well as other similar experiences in teaching and learning flashed into my mind when I attended my first lesson in my MA degree, in the Institute of Education in the University of London in the UK.

Next I move on to portray a slice of my first experience in a classroom in the UK to provide you with a silhouette of myself in relation to the context and the concepts on which this thesis is constructed.

1.1: Pianos and Drums: Different Stories of Learning

I was sitting down in a corner of the classroom and was waiting for the teacher who was due. My eyes and mind were running riot with excitement to experience what it would be like to learn in a classroom in England. It was fascinating to see different students,

¹ Piano and the Drum, a poem written by Imamu Amiri Baraka, delineates the inner emotional drama of a person, who is sandwiched between two cultures: the Western and the African. The word ‘piano’ is symbolic of Western culture, whereas ‘drums’ symbolises the native African culture. I borrowed the title of Baraka’s poem as a sub title in my first chapter.

with different complexions, clad diversely and talking in different languages under one roof. Students came in twos, threes, sometimes alone and sat down on the chairs which were everywhere.

After a while another student, in a blue tea shirt and a pair of blue denims stepped inside with a tray of books, walked straight toward the front, put the tray of books on the floor, and sat down on the front table with one of his legs on a desk nearby. What is he doing there? May be a senior student, I thought.

“All right. Had a good week end?” He started talking.

Students seemed to stop their talking gradually, turning their heads toward him. I wiped off my eyes and looked at him again. Can he be the teacher?

Next moment, the girl next to me started talking, taking both her legs on the chair. “Good Gracious!”

“Tom, what is your idea....” she was speaking.

I was surprised again to hear her addressing the teacher in that manner. However, 'Tom' seemed to be listening to her without any surprise. After a while some others joined her and it seemed that they were commenting on some current political issue. 'Tom' seemed to enjoy these stories nodding his head and commenting from time to time, 'excellent idea', 'there you are', 'perfect'.

I was still waiting with my new note book and the pen ready. I felt tired. Where is the lecture? I looked around. I noticed the puzzling looks on the faces of some other students who seemed to be from overseas. After a while, 'Tom' put some materials on two desks and the students passed them among themselves. The students began to move here and there inside the class getting into groups. The most dramatic things occurred when the students started group discussions. I joined the group where there were three Japanese and some other foreign students. The moment they got into groups the native students started talking. My effort to concentrate on reading the material was a failure. What a noise! Some seemed to read and talk at the same time. I watched two students arguing aloud as if there was no teacher in the classroom. Once I was almost raised from my chair by the loud laughter of a student, a lady, who seemed

to be in her late forties. I felt as if I were in a primary classroom back home. I thought for a moment, if I were the teacher...

A Japanese girl in my group looked at me inquiringly. While wondering whether I was going to waste one more hour like this I was reminded of something Geertz notes quoting Wittgenstein (Geertz, 1973):

“...one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come to another country with entirely different traditions...even given the mastery of the country’s language. We do not understand the people (...not because ...not knowing what they are saying to themselves). We can not find our feet with them” (Geertz, 1973:13).

I only read these lines while in Sri Lanka and now I feel I am actually living these words.

The story above depicts my first experience in a classroom which was of a different culture. Later, I encountered many such experiences, as an overseas learner in the Institute of Education.

These experiences received my attention and made me curious and confused:

“What is happening here?” “Why don’t they teach us anything?”
“Why this much shouting in the class?”

Such questioning provided the beginning of the stories narrated by most of the overseas learners during the first few months following their arrival at the institute.

Thus, what I experienced daily in the classroom and the stories shared by the international students gave me more insight in to my reflections on being a learner in this British university. Before long, I found my dual-self in the classroom as well as inside the institution; one who was yearning for subject matter knowledge, and the other, trying to explore something else. While walking on the corridors of the Institute, while in the canteen or in the library, I was wondering, what is going on here?

Gradually, I began to feel these differences more passionately. Sometimes I discussed these issues with my teachers in this

institute. These discussions threw light on the notions such as “culture”, “Western Classroom”, “difference”, and “passive Asian learners”. One of the teachers, while informally talking about these issues questioned me “*Can learners from different parts of the world coming here to learn expect the institution to change according to their ways?*” Such ideas continually recurred in my mind and encouraged me to reflect more on the experience of overseas learners, learning in this British university.

There was another event which added to my confusion. That was the formal introduction to ‘academic English’. Being a lecturer in Teaching English as a Second Language, I thought that I knew how to produce an academic piece of writing. Despite that factor, we were told how to, and how not to write, where to put the commas and when to break the paragraphs. I wondered, what is wrong with the way I am used to writing assignments back home? One of the students from Sri Lanka continuously questioned the tutor for academic writing what the need for following the English way of writing English. That was a silent query of most of the overseas students. One day, a few of us overseas students got together for tea. Somebody started talking about the kind of academic writing

we have to follow in the Institute of Education. Another one was enthusiastically contributing to the discussion and was referring to Phillipson's ideas about academic English (Phillipson, 1992). Tara, an Indian girl, mentioned that emphasis on academic English according to Phillipson advocates English linguistic hegemony and linguistic imperialism. And someone else added that academic English is symbolic of the relationship between the 'Centre' and the 'Periphery' which is one of dominant and dominated. However, I could not make proper sense of these terms during that time.

Likewise, I noticed different idioms in relation to many aspects of being a learner in a British Higher Education institute. I felt this situation very confusing. The process of going to lectures and taking down notes to get ready for examination does not seem to work here. I felt sandwiched between my familiar narratives of being a learner and the stories narrated by this new pedagogic encounter.

I was more puzzled to find the teachers and the teaching learning situations serenely engaging in their way of doing learning as if

nothing strange was happening here, at least for some learners who felt it.

By the time I finished my MA course, I was aware that my reflections and interpretations on this novel pedagogic experience had been mediated by my familiar narratives of being a learner, teacher and teacher educator in another culture which was a British colony for over hundred years in the past.

Geertz (1983), describing his experience in Balinese culture, notes the possibility of multiple interpretations of experiences, which are dependent on one's own way of viewing the world. Nevertheless, he again mentions that:

“...Deeply different can be deeply known without becoming any less different; the enormously distant enormously close without becoming any less far away” (Geertz, 1983:48).

Thus, I understood that the story of living the experience of being a learner in a foreign university could not be interpreted merely through judgements or in terms of my own native stories for

learning. This experience need not be passed unnoticed as an unresolved enigma. This understanding and the story of confronting, living, getting surprised and rejecting different idioms in a context of intercultural learning, fuelled my desire to research into the stories of being learners in an intercultural setting.

Building on that platform, I began to look for other stories that resonated with my experience of being in an intercultural learning context.

1.2: Similar Stories about Difference: Learning and Culture

Let us now see what the other similar stories about culture and learning, added to my quest of undertaking this thesis. My intention here is not to give you a minute detail about other instances which discuss culture and learning. That will be dealt later in the thesis. Here, I only highlight the clues that helped frame my personal quest into an inquiry for a PhD.

I begin with Jin and Cortazzi (1996:215):

“every culture of learning offers an alternative perspective on how to do things academically...”

According to them, learners' process of learning is shaped by cultural beliefs and values about learning and teaching, expectations about classroom behaviour as well as different cultural practices in relation to the ways of going about learning. This indicates that there are significant cultural differences in the way different cultures do learning.

Exploring the experience of international students in a university in the UK, Ridley (2004) notes that entering in to any University in the world as a student for the first time, means confronting an unfamiliar discourse of learning. Furthermore, this unfamiliarity is felt more strongly when the students lack the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984, in Ridley, 2004:92) that is present in the host university. Here, the meaning of cultural capital has been identified as "common learning, language and literacy practice". Ridley argues that the international students in UK universities bring different cultures of learning with them, which leads to different perceptions of learning, and different academic literacies.

Li (2001, 2002), McClelland (1963), and Bempechat, (1999) have revealed that there are different characteristics in the way different

cultures go about learning in relation to learning. Investigating the learning processes of Chinese children in school, Li elaborates on certain specific characteristics that are not commonly present among learners in Western societies.

Similarly, Stevenson and Stigler (1992) discuss the differences of American, Chinese and Japanese children in relation to their achievement in learning. They establish that the difference in achievement levels among different countries stem from different cultural practices related to learning. In the same vein Quinn and Holland (1987) have researched on the different cultural models in language learning and thought.

While most of the studies focussing on cultural difference in learning are centred on school education, a few studies highlight the experience of encountering different cultures in Higher Education.

According to Carroll and Ryan (2005), Holmes (2004), and McNamara and Harris (1997), international students in Western universities are a mushrooming business at present. Despite this factor, there is evidence which suggests that the cultural difference

among international students have not been adequately addressed by the Western universities (Choi, 1997; Carroll and Ryan, 2005). Examining the intercultural experiences of Korean students studying in Australian universities, Choi, (1997:263) mentions that Korea was the “*seventh largest market for the Australian education export industry between 1989 and 1990*”. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid in Australia to the difficulties faced by Korean students in Australian universities.

Hofstede (1986: 302-303), talking about the history of cross-cultural learning situations, explains the varying meanings and motives of intercultural learning for learners who normally belong to ‘poorer’ countries and the teachers who are from the richer countries. In his view, the learners are motivated for intercultural learning through economic desires and through desire for “wisdom, beauty, strength and status”, whereas the teachers’ motivation for intercultural experience is encouraged by “religious zeal, charity, intolerance or imperialism”.

Such studies on the one hand, reveal that the notion of cultural differences in going about learning is not altogether a novel

construction. On the other hand, inquiring into cultural differences for learning in Higher Education contexts transcends personal territories about experiencing learning, and moves toward wider contexts, interweaving the process of learning with political, economic as well as cultural issues.

Thus, fusing the knowledge I assembled through these existing stories with my first hand experience of learning in a context of intercultural Higher Education, I managed to develop the main focus of the inquiry described in this thesis. And my broad hypothesis in doing this inquiry is that people's experiences of learning are mediated through cultural scripts and these scripts differ in different cultures.

Having narrated the story of developing my quest in to an inquiry for a PhD, I now outline the essence of the process of my inquiry.

1.3: Essence of the Inquiry

The above introductory story provides the context and the emergence of the concepts that frame my inquiry in this thesis. The rest of the chapter outlines the story of doing this simple project

very briefly, mentioning my epistemological as well as ontological stance as a researcher and a human being in living this inquiry.

I start presenting the area of my inquiry; are there different cultural scripts in different cultures in terms of being a learner?

At this stage it needs to be acknowledged that the issue of 'cultural scripts' and its relationship or otherwise with the learners, who come from different cultures to an intercultural Higher Education context still remains untrodden in the area of educational research. Nevertheless, as I have indicated in the previous section, there are studies which focus on the concept of culture and its impact on the relationship with the notion of learning. Most of these studies seem to have been influenced by certain assumptions regarding learners, who come from certain cultures. Asian cultures and Western cultures have mostly been compared and discussed in terms of their differences (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992; Choi, 1997; Stigler and Hiebert, 1998; Hwang, Francesco and Kessler, 2003). Moreover, these studies seem to stereotype Asian learners and Western learners, highlighting a narrow meaning of the concept of culture as

nations. Additionally, the majority of such studies focus on the context of school education.

Reflecting on the above discussed issues I felt that there is a hiatus in what has already been done related to my area of research, in terms of research focus, as well as the methodologies employed. Blending this understanding with my ontological and epistemological stance in doing research I thought of more authentic means of addressing the main quest in this study (I describe my epistemological and ontological stance in depth in chapter 4).

I believe that knowledge is socially constructed rather than given and view that the world consists of multiple truths instead of one single truth. Informed by these views epistemologically and ontologically, I intend to employ narrative approach and social constructionist view in doing this inquiry. I will conduct active interviews, using an opportunity sample, to construct the stories of learning in an intercultural context of higher education with the Post Graduate students in the Institute of Education (see chapter 4). I use

constructivist grounded theory for systematic (at every step of the way) generation of theory from my data.

I am going to narrate the story of doing this thesis using the following format.

I consider the introduction to this inquiry as the first chapter, which makes the platform for the development of the study, introducing my broader hypothesis and the main purpose of doing this inquiry.

The second chapter describes the major concepts used in this thesis. This chapter explains the meaning of the notion of cultural scripts as well as culture as they have been interpreted in terms of the ontological and epistemological stance of doing this inquiry.

Chapter 3 critically reviews the stances on literature which focus on similar areas of study to my research, highlighting how I position my interest in doing this inquiry in relation to what these literatures reveal and do not reveal.

In chapter 4, I will examine the approaches to the methodology employed in this inquiry. I detail my ontological and epistemological stance as an inquirer and its impact on choosing my approaches in living this inquiry. Thus, this chapter will argue for my choice of using narrative approach and constructivist grounded theory for inductive generation of theory. In the mean time, I build up my argument for conducting active interviews to construct knowledge with the respondents, making use of an opportunity sample.

Data collection will be the main focus of chapter 5. I narrate the process of assembling knowledge, starting with how I approach my respondents and co-construct knowledge with them, using active interviews. I highlight how the process of theoretical sampling is used to refine the data collected.

What I need to mention at this stage is that even though the thesis comprises two separate chapters for data collection and data analysis, these two chapters overlap in the actual process of this inquiry. The reason is that I collect and analyse data at the same time using the constant comparative method.

In Chapter 6 and 7, I describe the process of making sense of the stories I construct with my respondents during active interviewing. Chapter 6 will describe cultural scripts for learning in relation to activities for learning while role relations for learning will be the main focus in chapter 7.

The illuminating issues that emerged through the meta-narratives of respondents will be explored in chapter 8.

A critical examination of the implications of this project on aspects of intercultural issues in higher education will be the main focus of the last chapter of this thesis. An examination of the limitations in relation to the process of doing this thesis will bring the story of narrating the inquiry that is in focus in this thesis to a closure.

Chapter 2: Culture and Cultural Scripts

2.1: The Notion of Culture

In this chapter I intend to describe the major concepts in my inquiry; culture and cultural script. First, I discuss the meaning of the notion of culture in some detail and then move onto highlight the meaning of cultural scripts. I make use of this discussion of culture to frame the foundation for my choice of the meaning of culture, so that it can accommodate my epistemological and ontological stance as well as the broader hypothesis underpinning this study.

I begin the discussion with an example which highlights an aspect of culture as well as certain cultural scripts among Sri Lankan people during a particular time in a particular rural village in Sri Lanka. This example comes from three significant novels written by Martin Wickramasinghe, one of the famous writers in Sri Lanka. I have chosen to discuss these three novels in brief since they delineate the complex, fluid nature of the notion of culture which is emphasized in this thesis.

These three novels, which are interconnected, develop particular themes which are social, cultural, economic and psychological. These themes are brought in to light by portraying how three generations of an aristocratic family with its roots in a rural, conventional culture make sense of life in an era of social change.

Wickramasinghe (1944) starts with the novel “Gamperaliya” (Revolution of the village). This portrays the gradual change of a particular rural village in the Southern part of Sri Lanka. This novel delineates how the emerging middle class, English education and commercialism during the 1940s and 1950s influenced the way people living in a stratified, remote village went about their lives. These people strongly believe in perpetuating their cultural ways of doing life as well as the existing stratified social fabric, in which the aristocrats hold the highest social status. This particular way of thinking was challenged by Piyal, the young man from a working class family, who gained access to English education (which was basically meant for the upper social classes as well as those who were willing to convert in Christianity during the 1940s) and becomes a successful businessman. By the end of this novel, he marries an aristocratic woman, who once refused him owing to his

low social roots. Thus, Piya's character symbolically epitomizes how social and economic changes change cultural ways of going about doing love, life and human relationships.

The author of this novel continues the story of telling life by writing two more novels 'Kaliyugaya' ('Age of Destruction'), and 'Yuganthaya' ('End of an era'), in 1957 and in 1949 respectively. These novels delineate how Piya's children and grand children, who are exposed to a kind of Westernized life, make sense of life in a different manner. Significantly, there are certain characters who continue to appear in all three books, providing awareness for the next generations about their rural roots. Through this particular technique, the author portrays the subtle intricacies of the changing and unchanging nature of the rural, Sri Lankan village culture. This sheds light on the fluid, transient and intransient nature of culture. For instance, as the novels depict, those who attempt to adjust to the socio-economic changes with no regard for their socio-cultural roots fail to achieve 'success' socially, culturally, and emotionally, while those, who strongly stick to the past and tradition also find no satisfaction in life. Thus, the author suggests that the changes that occur in the socio-economic fabric do not harmonize in terms of the

cultural meanings people give to life and its practices within a particular culture. In sum, he implies that even at a slow speed cultures respond to social changes, while preserving some roots of culture.

I started this chapter with the above discussion since it sets a firm platform for introducing my choice of the meaning of culture as it is employed in this thesis. On the one hand, it articulates with the concept that culture and its meanings are intertwined with the notions of transformation as well as transmission which can result from social interaction. On the other hand such portrayals highlight the fact that culture means ‘*our descriptions of our experience*’ (William, 1961:55). Making sense of what William means, one may say that culture refers to how people, living in a particular society, story their ways of going about life in particular ways, depending on different social circumstances. This meaning of culture, which has been articulated by Wickramasinghe during the 1940s, has been highlighted by Bruner (1996:14-15). According to him:

“Life in culture is interplay between the versions of the world that people form under its institutional sway and the versions of it that are products of their individual histories”.

This implies that culture refers to various interpretations of life and world that are given meaning by the people, with particular histories, living in a particular community, during a particular era. In the discussion which follows, I briefly introduce the development of the notion of culture with the intention of making use of it to build up my argument of the meaning of culture in this thesis.

2.1. 1: Development of the Meaning of Culture

This section outlines how the meaning of culture has evolved over the years according to different schools of thought. I intend to use this evolving quality to make the frame for my choice of meaning of culture in this inquiry.

I start introducing four basic views of culture. From there I go on to highlight the notion of culture as a socially constructed, dynamic phenomenon with contextual meaning. Drawing on the emerging characteristic of a socially constructed notion of culture, I frame the argument that culture means the stories narrated by people, living in a particular community, during a particular time, thus paving the way to accessing the meaning of culture, which I highlight in doing this inquiry.

According to Jenks (1993:7), “*Culture itself whatever its facticity, is also a concept with a history*’. This implies that culture is a notion that has evolved over the years. Describing this evolving nature, Jenks further notes that the historical development of culture depends on the massive changes that were occurring in the structure and the quality of social life. These changes according to Jenks have stemmed from social, political, and personal level changes in relation to life. These ideas suggest that culture is resonant with the notions of emergence and transformation.

At the same time, Jenks argues that the historical development of the notion of culture can be described in terms of the developments that had occurred in various schools of thought regarding society and human life. I intend to describe Jenks’ ideas about the development of culture, since it seems to articulate the meaning of culture I highlight in this thesis.

Describing the origins and the developments of the notion of culture, Jenks (1993) forwards a four-fold typology, considering the romantic tradition of Carlyle, materialism of Marx, Romantic elitist view and the pluralistic view of the concept of culture. As Jenks

points out, the romantic tradition holds a cerebral or cognitive view of culture. It therefore highlights culture as a state of mind. It carries the idea of perfection, a goal or an aspiration of individual human achievement or emancipation. According to Jenks, the origin of the romantic view of culture is found in literary criticisms of Coleridge and Carlyle and in Mathew Arnold. Talking about the aspect of materialism, he maintains that materialism is linked with the idea of civilization and has been informed by evolutionary theories of Darwin (1809-82.). He also mentions that materialism has links with the nineteenth century imperialism. He notes that this idea of culture highlights the province of collective life, rather than the individual consciousness. Describing the Romantic elitist view of culture, Jenks mentions it as descriptive and concrete. He holds that in this interpretation, culture is viewed as a collective body of arts and intellectual work within any one society. He claims that this meaning of culture differs from the Romantic notion which basically highlights the cognitive aspects of culture. This particular view of culture refers to exclusivity, elitism, specialist knowledge and training or socialisation and it includes a firmly established notion of culture as the realm of the produced and sedimented symbolic systems of society. The pluralistic view refers to culture

as the whole way of life of a people. This is the potentially democratic sense of the concept that has come to be the zone of concern within sociology and anthropology and latterly, in a more localised sense, in cultural studies.

The typology described above highlights the evolving nature of culture. Emerged over the years, it also seems to resonate with social constructivist views. It further suggests the dynamic nature of culture as a process. These views harmonize with the meaning of culture I develop in this thesis. I am interested in the idea of culture in society or the socially informed nature of the meaning of culture. Next, I describe some such views of culture, since they helped me to form my choice of meaning of culture in doing this inquiry.

2. 1.2: Culture as Socially Constructed

In this section I argue that the concept of culture can be articulated meaningfully when it is considered as a socially objectified phenomenon (Geertz, 1983), making use of some of the ideas about culture in literatures.

To begin with I quote Little (1990):

“‘Culture’ means all things to all men (and women). The term is used to explain everything...and nothing; to justify segregation and subjugation; to encompass national values...and antinational values; to claim rights for some...and rights for all; to mean “a total way of life of a people” and hence to include all knowledge, language, beliefs, art, morals, law and customs from the mundane to the sophisticated” (Little 1990:2).”

Little’s interpretation suggests that culture is a living social phenomenon experienced by people in their day to-day living. She articulates this by simply noting that culture explains everything and nothing and that it is a ‘total way of living’. She subtly implies that culture, while being a social phenomenon, can also be given meaning according to the purpose of using the term. For instance, culture is used to *“justify segregation and subjugation... from the mundane to the sophisticated”* (Little, 1990:2). This view suggests the dynamic sense of culture and the possibility of its being interpreted according to the purpose and context.

Kluckhohn (1951) interprets the conception of culture in the following manner:

“ Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditions (historically derived and selected ideas and especially their attached values” Kluckhohn, (1951 in Little, 1990).

Even though Kluckhohn's view articulates the idea of culture in society it seems to ignore the most significant characteristic; the dynamic nature of culture. His claim that the essential core of culture comprises traditional ideas and their attached values echoes a static notion of culture. Moreover, the expression 'core of culture' seems vague. What sense does 'core' make in terms of describing any culture? Where and how are we going to identify or feel this 'core' in culture? Furthermore, his interpretation, which highlights the significance of traditional values in culture, shows an absence of understanding the term culture as living phenomena, which is lived by people and their stories (Bruner 1992). How can culture be only

historical? If his argument is acceptable there is no present or future for the notion of culture and hence, it is a dead notion among people which is of no worth discussing. Hofstede (1980), defines culture in a similar way to that of Kluckhohn:

“The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. Hofstede (1980:115).

Hofstede seems to confine his use of the term culture to national groups. This in my view demands a considerable refinement. Further, as Little (1990) points out, Hofstede acknowledges that this meaning of culture can be applied to sub-cultural or sub-national groups. This view widens the narrowness of his interpretation, compartmentalizing the notion of culture into categories. The question is whether it is possible to understand the notion of culture, which is fluid and complex in terms of a particular nation, race or an ethnic group? Such interpretations can cater to the notion of cultural hegemony highlighting certain cultures as advanced and certain others as primitive or ‘uncultured’. As has been pointed out by Geertz (1983), categorizing nations as culture is very often a mistake done by anthropologists, who study cultures to which they

do not belong to. He notes that this way of defining culture encourages labelling of cultures.

The above discussion addresses two important aspects regarding the nature of culture, which articulate my stance of the meaning of culture. First, it highlights that culture is a socially objectified phenomenon and thus it is dynamic. Second, it portrays that culture, being a social phenomenon, can more convincingly be interpreted through contextual and symbolic meanings rather than set definitions. In this vein, the notion of culture will always gain different versions of meanings. Martin, (1981) clearly points out this factor. According to him, cultural phenomena are:

“Curiously resistant in one unequivocal ‘meaning’. They constantly escape from the boxes into which rational analysis try to pack them. They have a Protein quality which seems to evade definitive translation into non-symbolic – that is, cold..., totally explicit, once –for –all- accurate –terms” (Martin, 1981:28).

This suggests that culture is a phenomenon with symbolic meanings for living human beings and that its meaning is constantly

changing. Considering all the above-discussed factors, I argue that culture is a complex, fluid notion, which has its existence in living society amidst human interactions (Geertz 1983).

Next, I intend to explain this fluid and complex nature of the concept of culture, highlighting that culture is dynamic and therefore, carries contextual meanings.

2.1.3: Culture as Contextual Meanings

This section argues that culture is a complex process, the meaning of which can be articulated within a particular context. I use Geertz's interpretation of culture as the main thrust of my argument since in my point of departure Geertz is one of the most eloquent exponents of the view of culture and its fluid nature of meaning, which depends on its context.

Geertz (1983) argues that culture is a contextually constructed phenomenon and that understanding the meaning of culture is complicated. According to Geertz (1983), among other factors, two major reasons complicate the efforts of defining "culture". First, he

claims that culture, owing to its contextually constructed nature, is always open to diverse versions of interpretation. Second, he establishes that genres are blurred regarding differences and similarities among categories; subjects, nations, laws, religions and as a whole in the way of life, and hence the notion of “culture” is vague. Geertz describes this complexity eloquently citing a passage written by L. V. Helms (Geertz 1983:37-39). In this passage Helms portrays a cultural ritual in Bali, in which the wives of a dead king are ceremoniously and elegantly sacrificed on the day of the cremation of the dead king. As Geertz notes, it is very difficult to give meaning to this cultural act. He notes that it possesses:

“Mysterious conjunction of beauty when it is taken as a work of art, horror when it is taken as actually lived life, power when it is taken as a moral vision...” (Geertz, 1983: 40).

According to Geertz, this particular cultural act can be interpreted in many different ways by an onlooker with different cultural experience to that of Balinese culture. Nevertheless, the people in Bali, who perform this particular cultural act, within the specific context of the death ceremony of their king, can make sense of it

without confusions. I therefore make use of Geertz quotation to highlight the contextual nature of the notion of culture. This view of culture is emphasized by Geertz, when he writes that “*What is philosophy in Java is theatre in Bali*” (Geertz 1983:62). That means the cultural actions and their meanings are shaped by the context in which they take place. For instance, what is made sense as philosophy within the cultural context of Java is given meaning as theatre in the cultural context of Bali.

What I wanted to highlight by examining Geertz’s views is that the meaning of culture can not be static. It can not have a meaning that is easily understood in the same manner by any society, within any context.

The next section provides another characteristic of culture as I make sense of it in the process of doing this thesis.

2.1.4: Storied Meanings and Culture.

My intention in this section is to argue that culture refers to storied meanings constructed by people, about themselves. I make use of some literature as well as my personal experience in living, to describe this meaning of culture.

Starting with Richardson and Wood (1992), the main characteristic of human beings is their propensity to tell, listen to, discuss, reflect, dwell on, and be moved by stories. They further note that it is through our own narratives that we construct a version of ourselves in the world, and it's through its narrative that a culture provides models of identity and agency to its members. Bruner seems to articulate a similar idea when he notes that:

“We frame our cultural origins and our most cherished beliefs in story form, and it is not just the ‘content’ of these stories that grip us, but their narrative artifice. Our immediate experience, what happened yesterday or the day before, is framed in the same storied way...Even more striking; we represent our lives (to ourselves as well as to others) in the form of narrative” (Bruner, 1996:40).

According to Bruner, the way human beings go about life and their culture is framed in narratives.

Similarly, Cohen and Shires (1988) introducing a theoretical framework for studying narrative fiction, claim that narrative recounts a story, and that stories structure the meanings by which a culture lives. This is the central premise of my argument in relation to the meaning of culture.

Sarbin (1986) emphasizes the intertwined relationship between culture and narratives. He argues that human predicament and attempted resolutions are the central issues in the plot of life stories. He claims that human beings think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices according to narrative structures. He suggests the narrative nature of our lives highlighting that any slice of human life is guided by narrative plots.

In my view, all the above discussed ideas have been succinctly encapsulated in the following sentence.

Culture is “*the ensemble of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves*” (Geertz, 1975:448).

This view sums up the storied nature of culture. I have examined these ideas in this chapter, since they have provided me with the insight to shape the choice of meaning of culture, I use in this thesis.

Apart from views in the literature, I make use of introspection of my own life experience to form the meaning of culture as it is used in this inquiry.

I come from a very small island in the Indian Ocean. My life has been exposed to a saga of stories through out, since Sri Lankan life is interwoven with stories in multifaceted ways. In my view, there are two main reasons that contribute to this exposure. First, the social structure. Sri Lankan society is stratified and structured basically on beliefs, customs and traditions behind which there are stories rather than written rules. Second, the influence of Buddhism, the main religion in the country. The original canon of Buddhism is passed on to generations through oral tradition in Sri Lanka. In the

meantime, we have got five hundred and fifty stories (“Pansiya Panas Jathakaya”) which narrate the different births of Gauthama Buddha. According to history, all these stories have been transmitted through oral tradition for a long time since the ancient Sri Lankans have believed that the written form can always pollute the authenticity of stories. Even today, the basic approach used by Buddhist monks to preach Buddhism is narrative.

Moreover, the story of the very origin of the Sinhalese, the major ethnic group in Sri Lanka, is woven around a story. As has been mentioned in Mahavansa, (the significant book which narrates the history of Sri Lanka), the Sinhalese have originated from the marriage between a queen and a lion. That is why the people are named Sinhalese; (‘Sinha’ means lion). Of course, this story may be criticised as mere fantasy in terms of western scientific criteria regarding the history of a nation. This story is accepted not as myth, but as the story of our origin, without argument, both by the ‘educated’ as well as the rural folk who have never been to school.

Likewise, stories are related to almost every facet of Sri Lankan life. They frame the day-today life of most people irrespective of

the fact whether these stories are theories put forward through scientific research or just transmitted through rituals and practice.

I discussed my personal experience in living life in a particular culture, which is lived, interpreted, narrated and acted through stories. As Polkinghorne (1988) notes experience is meaningful and the meaningfulness of my personal experience as well as others' experience I found in literature helped me construct the meaning of the concept of culture as the collection of stories, people tell about themselves about living and their meanings.

Having described my choice of the meaning of culture, which is one major concept in this thesis, I now turn to the concept of cultural script. This discussion will be followed by a penetration into the relationship between learning and cultural scripts.

2.2: the Concept of Cultural Scripts

The concept of cultural scripts, though not very broadly employed, is beginning to be used in number of fields in the recent past especially in the field of linguistic discourse analysis, education, and anthropology and in the field of intercultural relations.

According to Stigler and Hiebert (1998), cultural activities are represented in cultural scripts, generalised knowledge about the event that resides in the heads of the participants. They further note that these cultural scripts not only guide cultural behaviour but also tell the participants what to expect. Highlighting that these scripts are widely shared, they establish that cultural scripts are hard to see and are learned unconsciously without any deliberate attempt.

Elaborating on this issue the writers note that family dinner is a cultural activity and thus, the customs and traditions related to family dinner are understood by the family members without any written agenda. According to their view cultural scripts are learned implicitly. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the notion of cultural scripts broadly as a way of seeing and being, which a person learns from their cultural experience. Describing this characteristic, Stigler and Hiebert (1998:2) note:

“Cultural activities do not appear full-blown but rather evolve over long periods of time, in ways that are consistent with the stable web of beliefs and assumptions that are part of the culture....These

, often implicit, serve to maintain the stability of cultural systems over time”

At a broad level, patterns of behaviour, which are seen as shared by a country group or a cultural group, are sometimes explained by recourse to the concept. For example it is proposed that Hispanics have a cultural script of "simpatía" (Triandis, Lisansky, Marin et al 1984) which emphasizes the expectation of individuals to avoid interpersonal conflict and to expect high frequencies of positive social behaviours.

In the meantime, inter-cultural relations have been examined in terms of the different parties, acting according to cultural scripts which differ. Possibilities of match or mis-match are described, and a key role is attributed to the context in which interaction occurs.

Triandis, Lisansky, and Marin et al. (1984), mention that the outcomes of intercultural negotiations can be influenced by setting the correct atmosphere and manipulating cultural elements, since situational, cultural and social contexts decide the kind of script for negotiation (e.g. competitive vs. harmonizing).

As has been discussed by these authors, analysts of the patterns in social behaviour and interaction have used the concept to explain how close relationships are dissolved according to cultural meanings.

At a very broad level, some analyses of gendered activity in culture have proposed that cultural scripts are undergoing change. Blankenhorn (1996) argues that contemporary USA no longer has a cultural script for fatherhood. At the same time he appears to argue for (re-) creating a particular script. Other writers in the same field prefer to illuminate the tensions and contradictions that fathers face as they try to conform to a predominant cultural script.

In a particular approach to understanding interpersonal relations (“Transactional Analysis”) the concept is invoked to describe widely-held stories in the human relations of a particular culture, for example racism (Batts 1983). Scripts are sometimes attributed to patterns of beliefs and action in different countries (Deborbon 1983 and Garcia 1984), and to different sub-cultures within a country (Portersteele and Steele 1983).

A more specific use of “cultural script” is found in linguistics and linguistic discourse analysis. For example Wierzbicka uses the concept to mean ways of speaking, which are characteristic of a given “speech-community” which constitute a manifestation of a tacit system of “cultural scripts” (Wierzbicka, 1998). This focus on the detail of communication is also taken by linguistic anthropologists (Goddard, 2000).

Having discussed the meaning of cultural scripts as it is being used in some areas of knowledge I will now consider the relationship between education, learning and cultural scripts.

2.2.1: Cultural Scripts in Education

Although there have been many discussions of the relationship between culture and education, the concept of cultural script has only recently been used to denote the patterns of interaction which are regularly created in educational settings.

For instance, Stigler and Hiebert (1998) use the concept of cultural script while describing teaching as a cultural activity and

highlighting evidence of consistent patterns in teaching across different countries (US, Germany, Japan):

“People within a culture share a mental picture of what teaching is like. We call this mental picture a script. The script is, in fact, a mental version of the teaching patterns ... mental models of these patterns. ... existence of scripts provides an explanation for ... the lessons within a country followed distinctive patterns. The lessons were designed and taught by teachers who share the same scripts” (Stigler and Hiebert, 1998:2).

According to Stigler and Hiebert, scripts for teaching means a mental version of the patterns followed by the teachers in the act of teaching. Thus, they establish that scripts for teaching in different cultures are different.

Nevertheless, some authors challenged the above idea arguing that similarities across classrooms in different countries are more significant, and they attribute the differences to the institutional culture of schooling (Le Tendre, Baker and Akiba et al., 2001). This argument does not really question the explanation by recourse to

script, but takes a different view on which is the dominant culture – country or institution.

Yet others argue that both variations can be accommodated by recognising the same small repertoire within which teachers utilize their options differently. For instance Anderson-Levitt (1987) describes how Japanese and U.S. teachers construct different kinds of lessons using the same limited repertoire of whole-class instruction and seat-work.

This evidence tells us that cultural script is not altogether a foreign idea in the field of education. Nevertheless, it is significant that the notion of cultural scripts has not yet been widely explored in relation to education.

Next, I consider the relationship between the notion of cultural script and learning.

2.2.2: Cultural scripts for learning

Cultural scripts for learning would seem to be an equally rich concept, but has not yet been researched. Perhaps the closest investigations are those of Jin Li and the concept of cultural models of learning (Li, 2001, 2002, and 2003). She has conducted several investigations in relation to cultural models of learning between Chinese students and U.S. students. These investigations will be reviewed in the next chapter.

Overall, the concept of cultural script would seem to help understand the connections of actors' meaning and action in a particular context. However there are variations to be noted among the writers referred to in this section in terms of their stance about where scripts are located and how scripts are learned. Views range from 'scripts are located in the head' to 'scripts are located in the interaction of a specified context', and from 'scripts are learned from early play experience' to 'scripts are learned in wider ways'.

Reflecting on the above discussion, in this thesis, I frame the meaning of the notion of cultural scripts as the ways of

understanding which a person has developed, and also the person's action and meaning in context. The significance of applying this meaning of script in this thesis is two fold. First, the dynamic aspect of the notion of cultural script matches with my epistemological and ontological stance; knowledge is being constructed and that the realities about the world are multiple. Second, the meaning of the notion of cultural scripts can address the main purpose of doing this thesis, since it is related to action. Therefore, I decided that the interpretation of the meaning of cultural scripts I employ here is more appropriate than any other general interpretation. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the meaning of the word discourse is somewhat closer to the meaning I use for cultural scripts. Discourse refers to a "*set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and so on that in some way produce a particular version of events*" (Burr, 1995:48). The difference between discourse and the meaning of cultural scripts I use here is that discourse does not include action, whereas cultural scripts do. I am not addressing issues of discourse in constructing knowledge in this thesis.

Having that said, I bring this chapter to a closure. Next chapter will review the literatures which discuss similar studies from which I could get insights regarding the main focus of my inquiry.

Chapter 3: Culture, Learning and Different Cultural Scripts: Stances in Literature

“Victor came from China to the United States ...and studying in the seventh grade.... When his father wrote in the ‘parents comments’ box on Victor’s report card, which showed straight A pluses in all the subjects, that his son needs to improve himself, his teacher ...asked ‘what more do you want for your son? He is already the best.’ Dumbfounded, the parents mumbled ‘...person needs to be humble and continue to improve himself in ...learning’. In China the teachers share the same with the parents and they would not complain like that!” (Li, 2002:45).

The above quotation depicts that different people from different cultures make sense of leaning in different ways. For instance, Victor’s parents’ views regarding learning surprise the U.S. teacher, whose cultural script for learning seems to be different from that of Victor’s parents, who come from Chinese Culture.

Such specific ways of doing education or learning has begun to provide significant focus for research in the field of sociological research (Hvitfeldt, 1986; Darwish and Huber, 2003 and Gutierrez

and Rogoff, 2003). As I have mentioned earlier, my main argument in this thesis is that different cultures have different cultural scripts for learning. In this chapter, I critically review other studies which have a similar focus to my main quest in doing this inquiry. My intention is to widen my awareness regarding what and how others have addressed the issue of cultural differences for learning for the purposes of locating my inquiry in the right direction.

There is one thing worth mentioning before beginning this discussion. According to some literature (Wierzbicka, 1998), the term cultural script has been employed in the field of semiotics, and it does not seem to be an area of study that has received attention in the field of education. The fact that I am trying to explore a rather novel area has resulted in a literature review with little literature. Nevertheless, the idea of cultural differences in learning seems to have received increasing significance in the field of education, cross-cultural psychology as well as international Higher Education, during recent decades. The majority of the studies on cultural differences in learning seem to have stemmed from views about intelligence, attitudes toward learning as well as motivation and achievement levels among school children. The majority of these

researches have centred their focus on studying Western cultures or non-Western cultures in relation to the above mentioned issues (Hess and Azuma, 1991; Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). In the meantime, the increase of learners who come from immigrant families to most of the main-stream schools in Western countries seems to encourage research on cultural influences on the process of learning (Fuligni, 1997). Starting from the 1970s, culture and learning has become an important area of research in the field of education with the rising numbers of international students in Anglophone universities (McNamara and Harris, 1997).

In this chapter I will be critically reviewing some selected, relevant literatures which focus on cultural differences and learning, which provide some guidance to find my own focus in my area of research. My criteria for selecting certain literature, which are relevant to the main focus of this study, are two fold. First, the literature should focus on the learners' way of going about learning. Second, they should make an attempt to relate learning and the concept of culture in their studies. For instance, "the Chinese learner" (Biggs and Watkins, 1996) portrays so many important stories about culture and learning. However, I do not find that they

are talking about cultures' influence on learning from the learners' point of view. Hence, I opted for not selecting such sources in my review of literature.

Having that said, I mention that I organize this discussion around two areas of significance as they emerged from the main focus of the literature I reviewed. Thus, I start with literature which focuses on the cultural differences for going about learning in terms of comparisons between the West and other cultures. Second, the studies focussing on cultural differences in learning, encountered in contexts of intercultural learning will be reviewed.

3.1: Seeing the Borders: West and the Rest

This section reviews the studies which focus on the cultural ways of going about learning emphasizing geographical locations such as Western and non Western.

At this stage, I need to remind the reader that “cultural scripts for learning” is still an unexplored issue in the field of sociological research. And amidst the studies, which have a similar focus to my study, I find Jin Li's studies on “cultural models for learning” a rare

source from which I can gain an insight into my main focus of this thesis. For this reason, I have chosen to review her studies in some depth in this chapter.

A significant contribution in relation to the issues of culture and learning has been addressed by Jin Li through her studies about how Chinese learners go about the process of learning. (2001, 2002, and 2003). Li (2003) has examined the U.S. and Chinese conceptions of learning with learning related terms collected from Chinese and American College students. According to her, the purpose of the study is to describe what researchers consider developmental end points of cultural learning models as they are constructed by students from the United States and China. This study examines the meaning of learning to people in these two cultures, how these meanings are organized as a whole and in what ways belief systems about learning in these two cultures can be different or similar. Li has used a total of 366 participants, who have been balanced for gender. The Chinese participants have been selected from several Chinese universities in a coastal area, and the U.S. participants were White middle-class and upper-middle class college students and graduate students.

Employing prototype research methods (see Li, 2003) she has generated English and a Chinese list of learning-related terms (Li, 2002). With the help of this list, Li concludes that the respondents from United States seem to conceptualize learning quite similarly to the Western traditional way of conceptualising learning. As she mentions, the American respondents view learning as a process by which the learner's mind acquires what is out there. Thus, for them knowledge exists as a more or less neutral body that the learners' or individuals' mind can acquire. Li maintains that American participants she studied are not passionately engaged in learning and that learning is not connected to their moral, spiritual and emotional lives. She therefore proposes that U. S. view of learning may show a 'mind orientation' toward learning. Contrary to this, the Chinese participants seem to regard learning which is very significant in achieving self-perfection. Knowledge, for them, includes an externally existing body as well as moral and social knowing. Hence, Li establishes that Chinese view of learning displays a 'person orientation' (Li, 2003:265). And she interprets these two orientations which describe the differences of Asian and Western ways of going about the concept of learning as cultural models.

Li further claims that the findings in this study provide some support for the five explanations previous research has offered in relation to differences in learning and achievement between Asian and Western learners. First, the argument that Asian people have a high level of intelligence (Hernstein and Murray, 1994, in Li 2003). According to Li, her study has confirmed that rather than the intelligence level, cultural attitude to learning influences achievement. Second, the claim that Asian people hold a more adaptive view of intelligence (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). Elaborating on this issue, Li explains that viewing achievement and learning in any culture as only connected to theories of intelligence is limiting. In the present study, Li establishes that the way the U.S. and the Chinese learners make sense of learning and achievement is more complex than what the theories of intelligence highlights. For instance, the U.S. learners have related achievement of learning to learning process, learner characteristics, and related social context. Third, she points out that this study has confirmed previous claims about cultural meanings for understanding differential socialization goals as well as practices in learning and achievement among Asian and the U.S. parents (Gardner, 1989, in Li, 2003). For instance, Li describes that if learning has been identified as a process of

exploring the world, the U.S. parents will adopt socialization strategies which improve creativity and independence. Commenting on the fourth factor that in Asia, particularly in Japan, the schools are better organized to provide the learners with scientific reasoning, Li establishes that more than the school organization, the Confucian emphasis on self-perfection leads to higher achievement in some Asian countries (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999). Finally, Li mentions that her present study supports the previous findings about Asian emphasis on effort and Western emphasis on ability.

According to Li (2003), these findings attest cultural beliefs about learning as very complex meaning systems. Moreover, she highlights that these cultural ways of making sense of learning can influence achievement of learners as well as their motivation levels.

The most noteworthy aspect of her research is that it seems to describe how Chinese learners view learning in a more authentic manner. Li, being a Chinese herself, seems to have more capacity in analysing and interpreting her data with her living understanding about the Chinese learners. That may be one reason why she does not move on to label the Asian learner as passive or inactive.

Instead, Li's study provides new avenues for the other researchers to make sense of the Asian learners, and especially the Chinese learners, in more depth, placing them in their cultural context. This study seems to provide the reader the rare occasion of understanding certain aspects of the non-Western learners, without basing them on Western meanings and theories.

Li's study widened my awareness in relation to how learners from different cultures view the concept of learning and the influence of culture on the process of learning. Significantly, this study invites the other researchers as well as teachers in rethinking their ways of making sense of the learners, who do not belong to Western cultures. More over, her approach of using learners as the respondents to study the learners' views about learning (the emic view) provides more authenticity and validity to her interpretations of findings.

Nevertheless, there are certain aspects of her research which should receive attention. I discuss these aspects in relation to the methods she has employed, the meanings given to major concepts of the

study as well as the ways she has used to make sense of her findings.

Li's strategy of asking the respondents to brainstorm learning-related terms for the purpose of collecting data, and then similarity sorting of these terms seems somewhat questionable. This particular way of collecting and analysing data has resulted in bringing about lists of categories of learning-related terms. When commenting on these methods in terms of 'scientific research' one may find they have helped Li to come out with her findings in a very successful manner with objectivity. However, this method, according to my worldview, and my stance on research, raises some questions. I found it difficult to understand why the researcher wanted to put the respondents in a classroom-like situation by asking them to take a piece of paper and brainstorm the terms related to learning. I feel that this situation is yet another mechanical attempt to study the process of making sense of human learning. This further raises the question of the meaning of educational research. Is it something similar to the process of classroom teaching where the students passively do what the teachers ask them to do? This issue leads to the question of power relations between the researcher and the

researched which has been an everlasting question in the field of research (Holliday, 2002).

Secondly, Li's attempt to bring parallels between the linguistic meaning of the term learning and the act of learning is noteworthy. The important question is what correlation she can find between the linguistic meaning of the notion of learning and the meaning of the act of learning, as it is given sense by the learners themselves in real life situations. For instance, in Sri Lankan society (and in any other society), the concept of learning covers a wide range of activities as well as different meanings. There are learning situations which occur outside the formal system of school. That means, learning comprises the process of learning through imitation, how to milk the cow, how to make food, how to collect the harvest, which are part and parcel of the life of a village child in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, if they are asked to write the meaning of learning in the school, in a formal manner, they would relate the meaning of learning to what they only mean by learning in school. Thus, they would produce a limited version of learning, related to formal education. Therefore, asking the students to write the meanings in a formal manner can affect how they interpret the actual sense of

learning, as they experience it in life. Hence, I wonder whether Li's method of collecting data could have been modified so that she could get a more authentic, pragmatic version of the word learning.

Her selection of the two cultures; the United States, which according to her, is "a typical Western culture" and China, which is a "typical Asian culture" (Li, 2003:258) is also worth discussing. Asia covers so many countries and many cultures while the West comprises geographically and culturally varying locations which can be different from the culture of United States. Moreover, this view of cultures influences her way of making sense of the finding of the study. For instance, she refers to her findings in terms of either the Western or the Asian culture, and it seems to be an unjustified over generalisation of the notion of culture, which is very complex.

Next, I focus on Li's employment of the notion 'cultural models'. Cultural models according to Quinn and Holland (1987), refer to culturally constructed and shared domains of knowledge that serve to structure and constrain people's experiences, supplying interpretations about those experiences and goals for action. The

notion of model is something fixed and static. This raises the question of the validity of a fixed meaning to study the flexible, fluid notion of culture. In my view, the notion of cultural models seems to convey a fixed, received kind of meaning to the knowledge, Li has constructed in doing her study in relation to learning and culture.

Nevertheless, Li's study can be identified as a very important contribution to knowledge construction in the area of culture and learning. First, it reveals certain significant issues regarding the influence of culture in the act of learning. Second, her studies provide the reader with the opportunity to understand how varying cultures inform different ways of going about learning, through the lens of a non-Western eye. What happens in the field of research very often is the opposite of this; the Western researchers making sense of what Asians or other cultures mean by the process of learning. The majority of such studies highlight preconceived ideas about learning that are prominent in the Western countries, and they try to understand learning among non-Western cultures with the help of these preconceived ideas. By contrast, Li's study, which focuses on the Chinese culture and the Western culture in terms of

going about learning, constructs knowledge in a more authentic manner. Therefore, this study seems to bring about certain issues, which are not basically dominated by the Western interpretations of Asian way of making sense of the process of learning.

A significant contribution to the knowledge about culture's influence on learning comes from Holmes (2004). Holmes writes about the cultural influence in learning and communication describing the ethnographic study on ethnic Chinese students in a New Zealand university. Holmes has studied 13 Chinese students for eighteen months. These students were from China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Hong-Kong. The methods used were observation, semi-structured interviews, and informal meetings with the respondents.

This study highlights that Chinese cultural ways of going about, interacting, communicating and writing has influenced their learning in the Western university and consequently, these students have faced difficulties in adapting to the new learning environment.

Significantly, this study holds that educational traditions strongly influence the nature of interpersonal communication for learning. Hence, the Chinese way of interacting inside the classroom has been studied in terms of the Confucian tradition. The results highlight that the students found it difficult to adjust themselves to the dialogic kind of class room communication, critical writing and reading. Similarly to the findings of Li (2003, 2002), Holmes found the Chinese students working very hard, giving prominence to effort. At the same time, the study establishes that the Chinese learners face difficulties in relation to critical analysis of issues and analysing theories. However, within the eighteen months period of the study, the respondents have adjusted to some 'coping' methods, such as managing time more effectively and prioritizing what to read. According to Holmes, these coping strategies are only surface level approaches to learning. Even though some learners seemed to have adapted to the demands of writing in the New Zealand University, the majority of the learners have been identified as obeying authority, and emphasizing acquiring knowledge rather than contesting it. Critically analysing others' points of view has been recognised as difficult for these students since criticising others results in loss of face in the Chinese culture.

The findings of this study seem to resonate with some of the ideas of Li, (2003, 2002) and On, (1996 in Watkins and Biggs) in relation to the views about effort, relation between Confucian tradition and learning as well as the influence of 'losing face' in terms of classroom interactions. This study also adds to the knowledge about cultures' influence on the process of learning in a significant manner.

However, as has been rightly accepted by Holmes, the researcher's location as a New Zealand doctoral student, the knowledge about the research domain as well as the predispositions of the Western research tradition could have shaped the process of doing this research. And there is evidence for this shaping within the research design and in the interpretation of findings. For instance, Holmes seems to interpret certain Chinese cultural ways of going about interaction for learning, with little understanding about their cultural ways of learning. In his terms, the Chinese learners are not aware of how to engage themselves in discussions, their construction of being critical is different from what it should be, and their way of communication is not dialogic. Hence, they are surface learners. In my view, this kind of sense making about

Chinese learner results from two issues. First, the Western researchers' attempt at understanding other learners in terms of the conventional wisdom about good and effective learning that is established in the Western countries (Biggs, 1996). Second, the misunderstandings held by the Western researchers about the Chinese learners' cultural ways of doing learning. For instance they may not be critically arguing in front of the teacher, because their teacher-student relationship is different from the teacher-student relationship in Western culture. The noteworthy factor is that these uncritical, silent learners have been able to achieve considerably higher in certain school subjects than their critical and dialogic Western counterparts (Biggs, 1996). The comparative study conducted by Stevenson and Stigler (1992) provides evidence for the higher achievement levels of Chinese, Japanese and Taiwan learners in Mathematics in comparison to their counterparts in America. This amounts to the question how can these passive Chinese learners achieve higher than the active, U.S. learners? And in the meantime, the finding that Chinese learners are surface learners can be argued with evidence from the studies carried out by Biggs (1990,1991) and Watkins, Regmi and Astilla, (1991, in Biggs,1996). According to their findings, the Chinese students have

reported a strong preference for meaning-based, high-level learning strategies compared to comparable groups of Western students, when they were compared for the preferences for approaches for learning.

What is interesting here is that irrespective of the researchers' emphasis on the need for responding to cultural differences of Chinese students without considering them as difficulties or problems, the interpretations of the findings have undertones of difference as a difficulty on the part of the Chinese learners. Thus, Holmes proposes to organize 'support' systems for the Chinese learners who come to New Zealand universities so that they will cope with the academic conventions and behaviours that are favoured in the host university. These views have connotations with a deficit view about Chinese learners. Nevertheless, Holmes mentions that international students should be treated as an educational resource for the native students as well as the teachers and invites the teachers to move their mind set from the deficit approach to a difference view of Chinese.

Another significant contribution in relation to the knowledge about cultural differences for learning has been offered by Stevenson and Stigler (1992). This study is considered one of the major studies that speak about differences in learning among school children in relation to the culture the learners come from. Of course, Stevenson and his collaborators have provided the educators as well as researchers with the largest body of knowledge about cross-national differences between Asian and American learners in terms of achievement in mathematics learning (Bempechat and Drago-Severson, 1999). In this particular study, they have studied Japanese, Chinese and the U.S. school children for the purpose of understanding cross-national influences on achievement differences in learning mathematics.

The findings highlight that the American students lag behind their Asian counterparts in their mathematics achievement. Discussing their findings they claim that this high achievement of Asian learners result from overwhelming differences in some aspects of these cultures which influence their learning processes. Among these differences they highlight differences between the perception of errors in learning in each culture, parental support for learning,

and attitude toward achievement of learning and greater emphasis on effort than ability. They hold that the schools in the U.S. culture believe that errors are possible predictions of ultimate failure and hence errors should be avoided, whereas Japanese and Chinese cultures believe that errors can be corrected with effort. Talking about the attitude toward academic achievement, they point out that the U.S. children are less competitive, more creative and easy going in learning whereas the Chinese and the Japanese are very competitive, lack creativity and do extra hours out of school to enter prestigious universities. They further claim that the parental support for Chinese and Japanese are much more in comparison to the support the U.S. students get from their parents. With these assertions Stevenson and Stigler (1992) related the higher achievement level in mathematics among Asian students to cultural issues that are embedded in the Confucian tradition, which highlight effort in achieving success. The American students, by contrast, who come from a Western tradition of thinking, which relates achievement to innate ability, do not emphasise effort. They maintain that their study thus proved no substantial basis for positioning the higher achievement levels among the Japanese and Chinese students in their innate mathematical ability.

This study contributes to knowledge about culture and learning in a significant manner, highlighting the intertwined nature of learning and culture. It provides evidence and thus invites the other researchers to rethink the culture-free notion of learning.

Notwithstanding the fact that this study contributes significantly to the knowledge regarding culture and learning, there are certain issues that should receive attention. I discuss these issues in relation to the methodology used and the interpretations given to their findings.

Justifying the strategy used to collect data, Stevenson and Stigler (1992) mention that they prepared a test, which is culturally fair, in collaboration with a team of researchers from each culture. Significantly, one may first question what they mean by “culturally fair” and the degree of fairness in relation to all the three cultures involved in the study. The notion of culture is enormously complex and, therefore, preparing a single test to be fair with three different cultures is problematic. One may go to the extent to say that the idea of preparing a culturally fair test for different cultural groups is an illusion. For instance, a particular wording of a question itself

can make two contrasting meanings in two different cultures. The second issue worth highlighting is how far can test scores articulate cultural differences of going about learning in three different cultures? In the main, written tests and their scores can not be assumed as a valid way of identifying issues of culture. In my view, culture is a subtle phenomenon which is more felt and lived by human beings rather than an issue that can easily be categorised or described through test scores. In the meantime, preparing for tests, as well as preparing tests, can have different meanings in different cultures. This particular issue cannot be overshadowed by mere use of research representatives from each culture they are studying, for the purpose of preparing the test.

Moreover, the main purpose of their study is to find out cross-national differences in mathematics achievement rather than cultural differences. What I find is that the notion of nation and culture has not been defined properly in this study. It seems that this study recognizes the notion of culture as synonymous to ethnicity. Ethnicity and culture are two different notions. Similarly to some studies conducted by the researchers from Western

societies, this particular study also interprets culture in a narrow manner, considering only the geographical locations of societies.

How Stevenson and Stigler interpret their findings seem noteworthy. For instance, while their data has shown that the achievement in Mathematics among Asian students is much higher than the U.S. students of the same age, they seem to push themselves to narrate the story of the Confucian tradition that influences Asian achievement, ignoring that Asian learners also own innate ability, which is directly related to their achievement. The stories of Asian achievement and effort have been questioned by Bempechat and Drago-Severson (1999), with evidence from studies (Beaton et al.; Bempechat, Graham and Jimenez, 1999; Bepechat, Nakkula, Wu and Ginsburg in Bempechat and Drago-Severson, 1999). Therefore, the emphasis on Asian effort seems an attempt at covering up the low achievement of American students. This seems another instance of stereotyping the Asian learner by Western researchers.

Of course, it is interesting to know that there are instances when Asian researchers themselves add to the stereotyped stories about

Asian learners. One such example comes from the study conducted by Choi (1997), for the purpose of identifying and exploring cultural differences between Korean and Australian university students that affect the teaching and learning processes. The research has used a sample of 47 students from six universities and other tertiary institutions in Victoria. The strategies used to collect data include questionnaires with multiple choice and open ended questions and 10-15 minutes interviews.

The most important aspect is that Choi begins to refer to cultural difference as difficulties right from the very outset of the discussion. In his terms the difficulties have been identified in the areas of language, styles of teaching-learning and relationships with peers and teachers.

One of the findings is that language difficulty has become a significant issue that causes difficulties the Korean students face in the Australian universities. Apart from that, the forms of address in relation to teacher-student relationship as well as interaction among peer learners have influenced their interpersonal relationships within the university. For instance, Choi claims that the Korean

students' habit of persistently addressing the Australian teachers by their titles can have a negative impact on developing healthy teacher-student relationships. Lack of confidence and training in critical thinking has been identified as another difficulty faced by the Korean students. They were found more dependent on the support of the teachers for learning. At the same time, the study reveals that the Korean students consider Australian teachers' practice of treating all the Asian learners alike, and grouping them together in classes, discriminatory. Thus, she concludes that one of the causes of the difficulties faced by Korean learners in Australian universities stems from their different cultural ways of going about learning. She proposes more organised and useful support programmes, professional counselling for Korean learners, opportunities for reciprocal understanding of each others cultures, and making the Australian teachers more aware of Korean students' problem areas.

Choi's study highlights that there are cultural differences in the way learners go about learning. It further illuminates the need for mutual understanding between the host institution and the international learners in contexts of intercultural learning. However,

her attempt to portray cultural difference as a problem, which creates difficulties in many aspects of Korean learners' process of learning, is noteworthy. While understanding the cultural differences between the two cultures, she seems to strongly emphasise the difference as a difficulty. Her interpretation of results, as well as recommendations (Choi, 1997), very often delineate the Korean cultural ways of going about communicating, writing and thinking as problems in a context of intercultural learning. Motivated by this view, she has prepared a long list of 'Strategies and Support' Programmes for Korean Students' (Choi, 1997; 276-277) with the intention of helping the Korean learners in Australian Universities. Furthermore, she mentions that Korean learners face problems during classroom discussions as a result of their "*shyness, low self-esteem and inadequate preparation*" (Choi, 1997:271). What I feel is that there should be more reasonable and significant cultural meanings behind the difficulties the Korean students face during discussions in an intercultural classroom context.

One major reason for making such simple claims may be the methodologies she uses in this study. Choi has used questionnaires

with multiple choice questions and this can encourage the respondents to provide the answer the researcher wants. She has also used open ended questions. It is not exactly clear why she used multiple choice questions when she could have elicited respondents' views through open ended questions in a more purposeful manner. I further wonder whether the 10-15 minutes interviews have provided the respondents with enough time to express their views about the experience in learning in an intercultural context.

Overall, Choi's study contributes to the existing knowledge about cultural differences encountered in intercultural contexts of learning. Nevertheless, one may feel that her point of view about the Korean learners' 'difficulties' of going about learning has been forced into her discussion of the findings of her study.

Significant findings in relation to the impact of culture and context of learning on the way teachers interact with their students as well as students' motivation to learning have been discussed by Salili (2001). This study explores how far the teachers' performance feedback and reward and punishment can influence the motivation

and learning behaviour of the Chinese learners in Hong-Kong universities and colleges. Salili aims at testing two hypotheses. First, praise and criticisms have different meanings and effect differently on students' perception of ability, compared to that in the West. Second, socio-cultural, situational and contextual factors mediate achievement attributions. Several experiments have been carried out in order to test these hypotheses and I am reviewing only two of them in this section.

Experiment 1, which is aimed at testing the above hypotheses has studied 240 undergraduate students, aged 18-25, studying in the University of Hong-Kong. Participants were told to imagine that they are in a math class, solving a math problem. The solution has to be written down and enough time was given to write the answers. Once the students have finished, the teachers look at each student's book, as well as his or her fellow student's, book, and they would use praise or criticism as well as neutral condition. For instance, in the neutral condition the teacher will say the "answer is correct" or not. In the praise condition they would say "you have done very fine," whereas in the criticise condition teachers would ask "what have you done there?" Salili (2001:84). According to the results,

teachers' ability's estimates were perceived to be higher when the task was difficult than when it was easy. At the same time, the successful student was rated remarkably higher on ability, than the unsuccessful student. A student who received neutral comment is supposed to be lower in ability than a student who receives blame after failure. The results of the study have shown no difference in the students' ability estimates in praise and neutral condition.

In the second experiment, 151 male and female participants, aged 18-25, studying in two post-secondary colleges in Hong-Kong, have been asked to estimate the teachers' perception of their own ability and effort. This experiment has not used fellow students. In the meantime, it has changed the comments used by the teacher to praise or blame the learners. For instance, for praise they have used "you have done well". For criticism, teachers would say "how could you have got it incorrect or what have you done?" (Salili, 2001:85). The results of this experiment suggest that ability has been perceived to be higher in difficult activity than in the easy one. And the successful students have been identified as having higher ability than those who are unsuccessful. No difference has been found between ability ratings in praise and neutral feed-back after success,

and between ability ratings in criticism, and neutral feed-back after failure.

Commenting on the findings, Salili compares how Chinese learners perceive ability and effort in relation to praise and criticism by the teachers, with that of Western learners. According to the findings, there were occasions when perception of ability differed among Chinese learners. At the same time, there were differences in the perception of ability between the Chinese and the Western students. In Salili's view, ability for the Western student is an uncontrollable, stable disposition whereas for Chinese learners ability is flexible, which can be influenced by the effort of the learner. Hence, in the Chinese culture, teacher blame means that the student has been lazy so that he or she could not achieve high ability. Comparing this meaning of teacher blame with the Western view, Salili mentions that in the West, teacher blame implies that the student has not worked hard enough, but his or her ability is high. It also suggests that by contrast to Western findings, students in this study have found public praise as more important and effective than private praise. Moreover, it claims that the Chinese students depend less on external rewards such as praise than the Western students.

Therefore, praise from teachers is attributed to both effort and ability of the Chinese student. This view replicates the findings of Li (2003) and Stevenson and Stigler (1992).

In conclusion, Salili (2001:95) maintains that the study has found a “great cultural difference” in the ways Chinese and Western students make sense of teachers’ feedback. And this difference is attributed to differences in cultural values as well as different contexts of learning between the Western and the Chinese cultures.

Unlike the majority of the studies, which focus on Chinese learners, this study does not try to make sense of the findings in terms of the Confucian tradition. Instead, it relates the findings to practical and contextual aspects of current Chinese society. For instance, rather than relating learners’ perception of ability and effort to Confucian heritage, Salili claims that Chinese way of making sense of these concepts have been shaped by the teachers’ culture of praising. In Chinese culture, teachers do not often praise students as it is done in the Western culture. Too much praising in Chinese culture is perceived as spoiling the learner. Therefore, Salili maintains that the Chinese learners work hard, relying more on effort than on

external rewards such as teacher praise. Highlighting such contextual and cultural issues seems more practical than attributing cultural ways of doing learning only to a particular religious tradition.

Here, the researcher has used an effective way of gaining students' perceptions about the teachers' feed back comments on their tasks. However, the reason why Salili used a fellow student of each participant to comment about feedback in the first experiment is not made clear.

However, one may question the validity of Salili's comparison of Asian perception of effort and ability with the Western perceptions. The comparison is done using the findings of other studies carried out by other researchers in relation to Western cultures. Thus, the question is how far findings of different studies with different focuses to that of Salili's study can be used to make comparisons with the findings of this particular study.

And here again, I wonder the applicability of using the notions of 'Asian' and 'Western' in relation to describing and relating findings

of a study carried out with one particular culture. Inevitable question is, to which degree does Chinese culture represent the culture of learning in Asia, which comprises so many different cultures?

Despite such doubts, this study seems to add considerably to the knowledge about the impact of culture on the act of learning.

Geertz Hofstede's four dimensional model of cultural differences, which is based on his studies about employees of a multinational business corporation, seems worth reviewing even though it is not directly related to the main focus of my inquiry. In this chapter I review his article (Hofstede, 1986), intending that this particular article throws light on significant aspects in relation to making sense of cultural differences in terms of learning.

I consider that Hofstede's four dimensional model of cultural differences in relation to teacher-student and student-teacher interactions is worth discussing. The four labels chosen for the four dimensions are individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. He notes that individualistic cultures

which oppose collectivist cultures are based on individual interests and the individual's immediate family interests. Power distance refers to the degree to which a particular culture tolerates inequalities in power. Uncertainty avoidance, according to Hofstede, means the extent to which the people in a particular culture are made nervous about unstructured, unclear, unpredictable situations, and therefore try to avoid uncertain situations by maintaining strict code of conduct and believing in absolute truths. As Hofstede mentions, masculinity as a characteristic of culture opposes femininity. The two terms differ in the social roles associated with the biological fact of the existence of two sexes, and in particular, in the social roles attributed to men. The cultures, which he label as masculine, "strive for maximal distinction" between the role expectations of men and women.

The applicability of discussing this particular article is more evident since Hofstede relates cultural differences and their impact on the process of learning, when teachers and students represent different cultures of learning. It specifically makes sense of differences in the process of teacher-student and student-teacher interaction, in relation to the four main categories of cultures mentioned above. In

his view, the different value systems in different cultures shape the role expectations of teachers and students in a culturally influenced manner. However, these differences are rarely considered cultural. Instead, values accepted and these variations lead to “premature” judgements in cross-cultural learning situations (Hofstede, 1986:305).

Reflecting on his four dimensional model applied in teacher-student and student-teacher interaction, the findings suggest that cultural difference in relation to individualism/collectivism and power distance are the models that help distinguish rich, industrialized societies from poor, traditional societies. And he provides lists of differences that are encountered in teacher-student, and student-teacher interaction between collectivist- individualistic societies, small power distance-large power distance societies, weak uncertainty avoidance-strong uncertainty avoidance societies, and feminine -masculine societies. What is significant is even though he tends to categorize interactions in terms of certain cultural labels, he cites exceptions to these labelling. He mentions that fairly large power distances are found in some industrialized countries like

Belgium and France, while relatively individualist characteristics are found in some “poor” countries like Jamaica and India.

Thus, Hofstede describes that different cultures differ in their interactions between the teacher and the student, depending on the kind of society which they belong to. However, his proposal for addressing the cultural difference in teacher-student relationships for learning seems quite sweeping; “teach the teacher how to teach, teach the learner how to learn” (Hofstede, 1986:316). The first question one would raise is whether the complex issue of cultural differences he has found in relation to a kind of human interaction can be addressed in such a simple manner? He extends his views on the proposal by giving instances when institutions can apply these two ways of handling cultural difference. This kind of suggestion leads to unavoidable criticisms regarding a significant study. Moreover, he holds that effective trainers abroad should use methods of teaching which are outmoded and unpopular back home. Is this a different version of power issues that dominate intercultural learning situations, when the West encounters the cultures of the rest in the world?

Finally, his categorisations of cultures represent the Western and the non-Western societies even though he provides different labels to them, such as individualistic collectivist cultures. His long lists with characteristics of teacher-student relationship provide evidence for this.

The discussion above critically reviews literatures which focus on cultural difference and learning highlighting the difference in culture in terms of Western societies and the non-Western societies. Next, I critically evaluate the literature which discusses culture and learning in relation to contexts of intercultural learning.

3.2: Contexts of Intercultural Learning and Culture

As has been mentioned at the outset of this chapter, cultural difference and learning has begun to become significant in certain cultures with the rising popularity in intercultural learning opportunities in Western countries as well as the increasing numbers of migrant learners in developed countries.

A significant contribution to the knowledge in relation to cultural differences in learning comes from the microethnographic study of

Hmong classroom behaviour conducted by Hvitfeldt in 1986. Hmong, the ethnic minority in Laos, who represent the largest proportion of refugees resettled in the United States, have been socialized in a preliterate, pretechnical society. Hvitfeldt argues that when Hmong adult students participate in American basic education, their way of perceiving the world, and the way they relate to others in the society has influenced their classroom behaviour.

Hvitfeldt has observed thirteen Hmong students, ranged in age from 20-65, both male and female, who were enrolled in an upper-beginning level English as a Second Language and Literacy class for non-literate and low-literate Hmong adults. The research strategy employed in this study was participant observation. The researcher's own observation has been supplemented by the observations and interpretations of the classroom teacher, and classroom observations have been supplemented by observations of students outside and inside the classroom settings; at marriage celebrations, birth of a baby, or the arrival of a new refugee family.

One important finding is the consistent reliance of students on external rather than internal frames of reference. This was seen in their emphasis on cooperative achievement, the denial of individual ability for success for learning, and the belief that everyone's classroom work belonged to everyone else. Hvitfeldt mentions that when individuals are praised by the teacher, they shake their heads, and show hesitance to be singled out as being more able than their peers. When an individual face difficulties in relation to classroom activities others explain them the activity in Hmong language. Moreover, the students always wanted the teacher to direct them in learning instead of them initiating. According to the study, this results from their reliance on authority which parallels Hmong reliance on their community leadership. They also have considered achievement as the result of group cooperation. This according to Hvitfeldt is in line with Hmong social life which gives prominence to group activities in their daily life.

Apart from that, as the study reveals, these learners have personalized the interaction for learning as well as the content of learning. Interestingly, the classroom content of learning has been personalized through contextualization. When the context was not

specified, for instance in reading, they make use of the known, personal context, in order to interpret the text. For instance, once the teacher has read them a story about a character called Tim, who works in an office building. After the reading, one student who cleans offices to night has continued asking “*Where he work? Same place me?*” irrespective of the teacher’s explanation that Tim is not real and just a character in the story (Hvitfeldt, 1986:71). Furthermore, this has provided evidence for their unwillingness to accept fictional people, places and events for learning tasks. Moreover, these learners seem to have a holistic rather than an analytic perceptual style in relation to their interaction with classroom materials. They have shown a nonperception of categorisation thus, focussing only on the meaning of the whole rather than the parts.

This study concludes that the Hmong learners’ classroom behaviour has been influenced by their cultural knowledge and they use it to organize the learning experience inside the classroom. Citing Munroe and Munroe (1980 in Hvitfeldt, 1986), Hvitfeldt mentions that the classroom behaviour of these learners can also be interpreted in terms of their ‘traditional’ cultural ways of going

about life. For instance, these learners, coming from a ‘traditional culture’, tend to apply particular solutions to specific problems, rather than generalising solutions to new situations. As the researcher points out, the individuals in the modern society use generalized problem solving orientations, isolating elements and formal methods of analysis, in all areas of their life. By contrast, the “traditional” Hmong culture tends to use everyday methods of concept formation based on their experiences with concrete examples.

This ethnographic study seems to contribute considerably to the knowledge about culture’s influence on learning. And the strategies the researcher has used to study the respondents’ classroom behaviour help us get an overall sense of the influence of culture in Hmong adults’ learning behaviour. For instance, instead of observing the learner behaviour only within the classroom, the observations have been extended to significant occasions of Hmong community. This could have provided the researcher with a clear sense of the role of culture in their behaviour apart from the classroom learning situations.

Nevertheless, the common criticism against using ethnography and participant observation in understanding others' cultures can not be ignored in this study. One may question how far the researcher can understand Hmong cultural ways of going about life and learning by mere observations. Of course, observations help give meanings of cultures to a certain extent. However, the argument is that the culture being studied will be interpreted only in terms of how the observer understands it. In the meantime, the effort to identify the Hmong society as traditional seems worth discussing. 'Traditional' in whose eyes? What connotative meanings are given to the word traditional by the Western dominated field of educational research?

Spencer-Oatey (1997) explores British and Chinese conceptions of the degrees of power and distance or closeness of the role relationship between the tutor-post graduate students. This study has focused on the role relationships of the Post-graduate students taking Masters Degree by course work and tutors who teach such students and who have some kind of special responsibility for them. The study has employed a Likert-type questionnaire and semi structured interviews. The results have been discussed in relation to Western and Asian concepts of leadership and differing

perspectives on the compatibility or incompatibility of power and distance or closeness.

In this study, the countries which accept power issues in human relationships have been classified as high power distance societies. And those which support egalitarian values have been classified as low power distance societies.

According to Spencer-Oatey the study indicates substantial differences in British and Chinese conceptions of the tutor-student role relationship. Thus, the British tutors perceive that there is a greater power differential between the tutors and the overseas Post-graduate students, including the Asian students. This has been confirmed by the qualitative data collected in this study. The British respondents have questioned the legitimacy of the power differential, whereas the Chinese have related the issue of power differential to their customs and culture. Spencer-Oatey notes that according to Chinese respondents, the teacher-student relationship is one of father-son relationship in their culture. In the meantime, the study claims that differences in the educational systems in the two countries can not explain the different ways in which power

and distance-closeness are related to each other in the two countries. Describing this issue, the researcher mentions that British people associate informality with closeness and formality and difference with distance. In that case, the Chinese students should have a greater power distance between the tutors and the students than in Britain. Considering this practical issue, this study interprets its results supporting the claim that Asian leadership differs in quality from Western leadership. As Spencer-Oatey highlights, irrespective of this difference in the quality of leadership in certain cultures, some British tutors still continue to perceive overseas learners' different behaviour as negative and problematic.

This study seems to highlight the need to consider the cultural differences in a more authentic manner, considering the practical issues of using power and distance relevant in each culture. Even though using a Likert type questionnaire to study a cultural issue seems to be somewhat questionable, the study, in addition, has used qualitative methods of collecting data. Most significantly, unlike some of the studies that explore the differences of learning between the Western and the other cultures, this particular study interprets

the data with a better understanding of the Chinese conceptions of power distance.

Thus, this study seems to address a significant cultural issue, which can very easily be interpreted in ways that can influence the teaching and learning process in contexts of intercultural learning.

In another attempt to understand the cultural differences in learning, Hwang, Francesco and Kessler (2003), have studied how prestige and honour might influence student learning behaviours; feedback- seeking behaviour and learning outcomes in different cultural environments, using three countries, Hong-Kong, Singapore and the United States.

They hypothesise that individualism is positively related to desire to gain Mianzi and that collectivism is positively related to fear of losing Mianzi. Mianzi represents the prestige and honour that is supposed to come to a person, as a result of success and possibly ostentatious behaviour before others (Bond and Hwang, 1986). In this research the term “face” is defined as the need for social acceptance or recognition in group situations, the image people try

to maintain before others in pursuit of recognition and inclusion (Hallahan, Lee, and Herzog, 1997, in Hwang et al., 2003). They have used scales from Wagner's (1995, in Hwang et al. 2003) interpretations of the five individualism-collectivism (IC) factors, to measure individualism and collectivism. These five factors are IC1 (Standalone, focuses on independence and self reliance), IC2 (Win above all, consuming inclination to win in competitive situations), IC3 (desire to work in groups), IC4 (desire to sacrifice in group situations), IC5 (Individual thinking, the need for adjusting individual beliefs to accommodate in group situations)

The participants in this study come from undergraduate business studies ranging in age from 18 to 44. They have used questionnaires written in English for all the three cultures. The results, according to the researchers, suggest the impact of feedback forms on learning process is highly dependent on cultural context. For instance, Singapore was shown to be less individualistic than the U.S. along the three variables, IC1, IC2 and IC5, while being more collective on IC3 and IC4. The examination of the relationship between IC1 and mianzi gain indicates that Americans, who are individualistic in this sample, have the highest mean Mianzigain and the lowest

average Mianzilose scores. According to the conclusions, hypothesis 1, that individualism is positively related to the desire to gain Mianzi, was supported by the data; the more individualistic cultures having the highest mean for Mianzigain and lowest mean for Mianziloss. Hypothesis 2, that collectivism is positively related to fear of losing Mianzi was not supported by the data. The significance of the findings highlight that these patterns in different cultures influence the interaction of learners for learning, such as questioning during lessons, and also different learner behaviours like expecting teachers' feed back on written tasks. What emerges is that there are varying ways of learner behaviour and ways of perceiving the act of learning and learning outcomes depending on the particular cultural issues related to individualism- collectivism and Mianzigain-Mianziloss.

Of course, one may question how far they can decide on these cultural issues by studying students from three particular cultures, who study in one university. Apart from that, it is important to see whether the study has paid any attention to the meanings of the concepts of individualism- collectivism and Mianzigain-Mianziloss in these three different cultures, in relation to situations of learning.

The reason is that different ways of making sense of these concepts make different interpretations possible in relation to the results of the study.

Finally, it is worth investigating the article written by Cortazzi and Jin (1997) which highlights the cultural differences of doing learning based on communication for learning across cultures. In this article, they establish that there are differences in the way students from different cultures in higher education use communication for learning, emphasizing the experiences of Chinese learners studying in British universities. The article portrays these differences in terms of academic cultures, culture of communication and cultures of learning in these two cultures.

This article refers to academic culture in terms of belief systems, expectations and cultural practices about how to perform academically. Comparing the expectations of British academic culture with the expectations of Chinese learners, they mention that British academic culture has an individual orientation with horizontal relationships and that the learners are expected to develop independently with originality. By contrast, the academic

culture of Chinese highlights relationships. They believe in group orientation and the teacher is considered as an authority figure, who should be listened to. Therefore, while the British teachers expect active interaction from the learners, the Chinese learners prefer to listen to the teacher, who is the expert. They claim that this particular quality of Chinese learner can be interpreted as 'passive' by the British teachers. Cortazzi and Jin hold that the Chinese learners who do not speak out are active in their minds and even when they speak their meanings may not be clear to the British teachers, since their talk is contextualised. The Chinese academic culture believes in the mutual responsibility of the reader- writer or speaker-listener in terms of communication.

The second aspect they highlight is the cultures of communication, which is supposed to comprise different patterns of communicating information in a context of intercultural education. They point out how certain language areas such as pauses, intonation, body language and rhetorical patterns that are specific to particular cultures are ignored in intercultural communication (Smith, 1987; Saville-Troike, 1989; and Gudykunst, 1994 in Cortazzi and Jin 1997). They portray how certain rhetorical patterns of

communicating practiced in Chinese culture can inform their choice of discourse patterns. And this factor, according to the writers, can cause problems. For instance, the Chinese prefer inductive discourse patterns whereas the British teachers expect them to use deductive discourse. This can affect their way of talking as well as writing for academic purposes.

Next, they establish that the cultures of learning which is culturally embedded can cause misunderstandings between the Chinese learners and the British teachers. The meaning of cultures of learning according to them includes both the academic culture and the cultures of communication. Here, the writers justify the Chinese learners' expectations on getting the single truth from the teacher and the practice of rote learning, relating them in their cultural ways of going about teacher-student relationship as well as particular educational practices.

Cortazzi and Jin claim that these different cultural ways of going about learning between the British teachers and the Chinese learners can lead to misunderstandings between the two parties in relation to the act of communication for learning. This, according to

them, reflects on international education as well as the learning process of Chinese learners learning in British universities. They propose that cultural diversity in relation to communication should be used as a resourceful opportunity of learning across cultures. Moreover, they suggest that cultural synergy where both the teachers and the learners mutually understand each others' cultural interpretations of communication for learning can enrich the experience of learning as well as teaching in an intercultural context of learning.

Thus, the article by Cortazzi and Jin (1997) adds significant knowledge in terms of cultural differences overseas learners encounter in contexts of intercultural learning and its impact on the teaching-learning process. What is noteworthy is that this particular article leaves no space for the reader to feel judgmental views of the writers about any of the cultures they describe. The guidelines provided for teachers and students at the end of the article seem to raise very significant issues related to intercultural encounters of learning. The most significant is that it does not speak about forcing the Chinese learner into British cultural ways of doing communication. It does not speak about adapting the Chinese

learner into British culture of learning. Instead, it proposes reciprocal means of understanding each others' cultures so that both the host institutions as well as the overseas learners can learn from each other.

The discussions above critically reviewed the literatures in relation to cultural differences that exist in contexts of intercultural learning.

3.3: Seeing the Border and Crossing it.

The literature reviewed in this chapter delineates that the act of learning is embedded in culture. Hence, the main focus of my thesis seems to be a significant issue on the current agenda of educational research. While highlighting how significantly these studies contribute to the knowledge about cultural differences in learning, I critically look at the aspects that should receive attention, emphasizing the methodologies employed, findings as well as interpretations given to these findings.

In my view, the existing knowledge about culture and learning is basically laden with cultural biases. Significantly, the majority of the studies carried out by the Western researches seem to make

sense of cultural differences in learning through Western theories of learning as well as their own cultural ways of interpreting learning related activities. This has resulted in literature which stereotypes cultural influences in learning in terms of certain geographical locations such as Asian and Western. The reviewing of this kind of literature convinced me that stereotyping cultures in terms of learning does not add to the knowledge about cultural difference in learning in a constructive manner. Instead, it makes the reader feel that some researchers are trying to perpetuate the dominance they have established in the field of education over the years due to various social, political and economic advantages. This particular characteristic is more evident regarding the literature which discusses cultural issues for learning in intercultural contexts. It is quite significant that they very often propose that the international learners, who come from the non-Western cultures, should immerse themselves in the culture of learning introduced by the host institution, which is often a Western institution (Macrae, 1997 and Choi, 1997). This view implies that the learners' cultural ways of doing learning is insignificant, and it is only a problem in terms of intercultural contexts of teaching-learning.

Moreover, the meaning of culture as has been described in the majority of literature in relation to cultural differences in learning are vague. In majority of the literature culture is synonymous to ethnicity.

Reflecting on the methodologies used to study the cultural impact on learning, I find that there are studies which try to make sense of the fluid notion of culture in terms of numerals. The question is how far a concept like culture can be studied through traditional Western ways of doing research. Furthermore, the majority of the accounts on cultural influence on learning come from studies conducted by the Western researchers on non-Western cultures (Little, 1990; Christie, 1985, and Harris 1988). This way of researching into culture and learning adds to the power issues that are embedded in the field of research. Another issue worth considering is the possibility and the degree of providing an authentic account of others' cultures by conducting research on a different culture. This further embodies the questions regarding the approaches the researchers employ to study other cultures. For instance, if the researchers conduct observations, what meanings

can researchers from the West construct by observing different cultures?

These issues provided me with significant insight into what, when and how the main purpose of doing this inquiry should contribute to knowledge in relation to cultural differences in learning. Therefore, I decided to address my main purpose of doing this inquiry using a more practical view of culture, choosing learners themselves as the respondents. At the same time, I intend to use an appropriate, more applicable approach as well as methodologies that can articulate the main purpose of doing this inquiry in an authentic manner.

With a widened insight in to my way of going about doing this inquiry, through the critical reviewing of few, relevant literatures, I now move on to describe in some depth the approaches and methodologies that are employed in constructing knowledge in this thesis.

Chapter 4: Approaches to the Inquiry and Methodology

Quite a considerable number of literature have been written about the narrative approach in the current context of social science research. In this chapter I do not wish to fully review these sources. Instead, I begin by looking at the epistemological factors that underpin my choice of narrative as a research approach, and discuss how narrative can enable me to access the kind of knowledge I construct in this thesis. The methodology I employ in this study with its theoretical implications that are relevant in this inquiry will also be examined in some depth. Finally, I explain the strategy through which I explore the knowledge I am presenting in this thesis.

4.1: Why Narrative?

“There appears to be two broad ways in which human beings organize their knowledge of the world, indeed structure even their immediate experience: one seems more specialized for treating of physical ‘things’ the other seems to treating people and their plights. These are conventionally known as “logical scientific thinking and narrative thinking” (Bruner 1996:39).

According to Bruner there are two major ways of constructing knowledge in the world, which are “conventionally” identified as scientific and narrative. What I want to highlight is Bruner’s view that narrative is one particular way of constructing meaning in this world. The research described in this thesis has employed the narrative approach, since I feel that the main focus of this study can better be addressed through this approach. I find that the area of research I address in this study requires a human science approach which can narrate subtle stories about learning, cultural scripts and their difference or similarity in different cultures. Within the framework of human science, I need an approach which can articulate social as well as personal narratives, the meanings of which are reflexive, context bound and depend on the point of view of the teller as well as the listener. Further, the approach needs to highlight that construction and reconstruction of knowledge occurs in a world of multiple realities. Moreover, there is the need to communicate the readers of this thesis in a more serenely comprehensive manner. Considering these aspects, I chose to employ the narrative approach in conducting the inquiry which is narrated in this thesis.

The discussion below examines the use of narrative approach emphasizing my ontological and epistemological stances in doing this inquiry.

4.1.1: Storying Man

The recognition of the importance of narrative in human life seems to have a long history. For instance, Hans Vaihinger has mentioned that we live our lives by means of “functional Stories” in 1876 (Mahoney, 1999:1) At present, support for narrative understanding as a major meaning making strategy in human life appears to be permeating many fields of scholarly inquiry. Lieblich et al., (1998) highlight that narrative studies are flourishing among a wide spectrum of disciplines during the recent history of research as a means of understanding the personal identity, life style, culture and the historical world of the narrator. Further commenting on this issue they note that narrative approach is becoming significant in the field of social sciences since people are meaning-generating organisms and that they are storytellers by nature. They further remark that one of the clearest channels to understand the inner world and the behaviour of humans and animals is to give voice to their verbal accounts and stories.

Somers and Gibson (in Colhon, 1998) suggest that a reframing of the narrative concept is being appropriated into the central epistemological framework of a wide range of disciplines. One specific characteristic of this is the shift from a traditional rendering of narrative as limited to a method or form of representation into narrative as an ontological condition of social life. Narrative psychology is another discipline, which centres its focus on narrative as an approach to understand human beings. Narrative psychology refers to a viewpoint or a stance within psychology which is interested in how human beings deal with experience by constructing stories and listening to the stories of others (Sarbin, 1986). Entertaining the principle of narrative, Sarbin remarks:

“.....Survival in a world of meaning is problematic without the talent to make up and to interpret stories about interweaving lives.”

(Sarbin, 1986:11).

He talks about the significance of stories in human life emphasising the ability of narratives in making sense of the world. Thus, he seems to draw the intertwined nature of life and narratives in a world with meaning.

Polkinghorne (1988), highlighting the capacity of narratives in making meaning of the world, claims that narrative is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful, a fundamental structure of comprehension that bestows meaning on life, experience, and human action.

Similarly, shaping of human experience by narrative has been the main focus of Bruner (1987), in his turn to cultural psychology from cognitive psychology. Bruner notes that:

“Story telling is life-making: we are our stories: a life as led is inseparable from life as told” (Bruner, 1987:31).

Bruner highlights that human beings are the stories they tell about themselves. His view on the intertwined nature of man and narrative has been extended in his book *Culture of Education* (1996). As Geertz (1997) points out, most of Bruner’s book traces the implications of narrative as a mode of thought, and as an expression of a culture’s world view. According to Bruner, *“we represent our lives ... (to ourselves as well as to others), in the form*

of narrative” (Bruner, 1996:40). One may find that this view resonates with Sarbin’s idea of storied nature of human lives.

Bruner (1996) further argues that human beings assemble the selves they live in out of materials lying about in the society, and that from birth people are active, impassioned meaning makers in search of plausible stories.

The above discussion portrays that man as a storying being is on the agenda of a wide spectrum of disciplines. Furthermore, they explain the intertwined nature of making sense out of life and narratives. I argue that narrative approach can better address the main purpose of doing my thesis, which focuses on making meaning out of respondents’ stories in relation to their experience of being learners, in a context of intercultural learning.

The following paragraphs describe my epistemological and ontological stance in doing this research in some detail.

4. 2: Constructed Worlds

In this discussion I view my assumptions regarding the process of constructing knowledge, highlighting how I conceptualize the nature of the human beings and society. Informed by social constructionist views, I argue that knowledge is socially, culturally, personally and contextually constructed. In this argument, I make use of the ideas of intellectual traditions as well as my own experiences, which helped me construct the ontological and epistemological stances that are employed in conducting the inquiry described in this thesis.

According to Holstein and Gubrium (1995), there are two major points of view in relation to the process of knowledge construction. First, there are the structuralist and positivist traditions which argue for objective, rational knowledge. Second, there are the feminist poststructuralist and postmodernist traditions, which question the objective and rational ways of constructing knowledge, highlighting the existence of multiple realities in a constructed world. My understanding about the world and assumptions about the very basis of knowledge, its nature, and the form echoes the views of the latter. Hence, I do not make use of the structuralist, positivist claims

about the nature of social reality, which emphasise truth values as the only valid criteria for justifying propositions. I argue that search for knowledge can not be separated from what we mean by living. Life is always encountered by unexpected uncertainties which reveal to us diverse versions of non-rational circumstances, created and shaped by us and society. According to Lord Buddha (560-477 BC), who is among the earliest recorded proponents of some form of constructivism, the only phenomena in this world that will never change is 'change'(Mahoney, 1999). Therefore, the meanings we make out of any context are diffuse, and they always allow multiple interpretations. My argument in this thesis is that knowledge is a process, constructed, and reconstructed of personal and social meanings which are conveyed and shared through narratives. I further hold that human beings are proactive and future oriented and there is a dialectical relationship between environment and human beings. This argument is in particular intimate terms with the family of ideas called social constructionism. The process of constructing knowledge in living this inquiry is informed by social constructionist point of view.

The social constructionist movement is not marked by a singular perspective. According to Burr (1995), there are some major views in relation to construction of knowledge; attention to cultural-historical specificity in understanding the world, the view that truths are constructed by people and sustained by social processes, and the belief that such constructions of the world sustained some patterns of social action and not others. Burr (2002) notes that the central argument of constructionism is that language fails to function as a picture or map of an independent world. Rather, language operates constitutively, and is employed by communities of interlocutors for the purpose of carrying relationships (Gergen, 1997). Talking about social constructionist views about knowledge construction, Gergen (in Steier, 1991:78) explains that accounts of the world occur “*within shared systems of intelligibility-usually, a spoken or written language.*” These accounts are viewed as expressions of relationships among persons. He points out that language is generated, sustained and abandoned within social interaction. According to this view, knowledge is not placed within human beings’ minds or abstract descriptions. Instead, knowledge, as it is represented in language, is part of the coordinated activities of human beings. This view resonates with Burr’s remarks that “*when*

people talk to each other, the world gets constructed' (1995:7).

Thus, social constructionist views endorse a contextualised world view, considering world as an ever-changing text.

Extending his ideas about the move toward constructionism, Burr (1995) explains that to some extent, post modernism provided its particular flavour and the cultural-intellectual influence, against which constructionism took its shape. Postmodernism regards that the world as we know it, is the result of hidden structures. It has its roots in social phenomenology and social structural analysis (Berger and Luckman 1966) and social psychology (Armistead, 1974). However, Gergen (1998), notes that the contemporary constructionist thinking draws its primary sustenance from post-structuralist literary theory and the renaissance of rhetorical study. Consequently, its influences are often those of the French intellectuals Foucault (1980) and Derrida (1978, 1981) and theorists from the Soviet semiotic tradition such as Bakhtin (1981) and Volosinov (1976).

Next, I describe my ontological stance, which helped me construct the knowledge in this thesis in a particular manner.

4.2.1: Multiple Realities

This section argues that the process of doing the inquiry described in this thesis has been informed by the notion of multiple realities (Capra, 1992; Gergen, 1997a).

I begin describing how the question of reality began to confuse me, and how that confusion helped me form my view of the world as a researcher. Being born to a Buddhist-Catholic family, I was sandwiched between the world views of Catholicism and Buddhism. I was baptised, and educated in a convent, since my father was a Catholic. I learned Catholicism in school and had to go to church. At the same time, I followed the traditions of Buddhism, since my mother was a Buddhist. I listened to the Buddhist priests preaching that the experience of ‘truth’ is soundless, touchless, formless and imperishable. The knowledge that comes from such an experience is ‘absolute knowledge’ which does not rely on categorizations, discriminations, and classifications of the intellect

which is considered to be relative and approximate. This philosophy insists that the ultimate truth can never be an object of reasoning of demonstratable knowledge. These views about multiple truths are summed up in ²Upanishads in the following manner:

There the eye goes not,

Speech goes not, nor the mind.

We know not, we understand not

How one would teach it.

(Capra, 1991:37).

This suggests the inability of understanding the world which is governed by transience and multiple truths. This notion of truth seems to be in harmony with the teachings of Buddhism. In Contrast to this way of understanding truth and the world, the Church taught me that the only truth in this world is woven around the notion of one God and that I should never question this ultimate truth of the presence of God.

² This is the philosophical section of the Vedas in Hinduism. Upanishads means the inner or mystic teaching. See <http://www.hindunet.org/vedas/indexx.htm>

Later, the experience of living and studying in a multicultural society opened my eyes toward realities which were beyond my perception. I began to question the existence of ‘the truth’.

I made use of these insights, together with the acquired knowledge of other intellectual traditions to perceive the world as constructed with multiple realities.

Having described my ontological and epistemological stance, I now move on to argue how the methodology I employed helped construct the kind of knowledge I am interested in this thesis.

4.3: Grounded Theory: an Applicable Version

This discussion highlights the epistemological underpinnings that contributed to the choice of grounded theory as the methodology of conducting my study. First, I describe the theoretical perspective regarding my selection of grounded theory as it is used in the study. Second, I consider which particular characteristics in grounded theory approach, could address my ontological as well as epistemological stance. Finally, I describe how I have adjusted the

grounded theory approach as it has originally been introduced, and developed by Strauss (Corbin and Strauss, 1988; Glaser, 1978 and Glaser, 1967), to achieve the main purpose of doing this inquiry.

At the outset, I describe the meaning of grounded theory approach briefly. I think Corbin and Strauss (1990:23) provide a comprehensive picture of what grounded theory is. According to them:

“A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and analyzed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.”

This definition suggests that the main function of grounded theory procedures represent the natural order of human life and what

people do naturally in living their day to-day life. The world occurs within the pattern of integration rather than in a vacuum, and so does grounded theory. This particular characteristic provided me with the basic motivation to employ grounded theory in my research.

The grounded theorists' belief that knowledge is constructed rather than merely discovered is in harmony with the constructionist view of knowledge construction. Even though there are criticisms against the positivistic rationale behind grounded theory approach, there are significant characteristics which contribute to knowledge construction as a process. Moreover, it does not try to verify a theory and this paves the way for possibilities for modification or refinement of the theory emerged. This quality advocates the idea that theories generated through research can not articulate the ultimate truth or an accurate version of truth regarding any issue (Gergen, 1997a).

Next, I move on to describe two major characteristics of grounded theory; ability to represent the empirical world, and flexibility and

durability. I argue that these characteristics make the use of grounded theory approach more appropriate within the theoretical context of my inquiry.

4.3.1; Representing the Empirical Worlds

One significant aspect of grounded theory is its capacity to represent and understand the empirical world in an authentic manner (Charmaz, 2002). There are many aspects in grounded theory which help represent the empirical world. One of them is the idea of construction of theory grounded in data. The theory constructed through grounded theory should be faithful to everyday reality of the substantive area, and it should make sense both to the researcher, and the respondents (Corbin and Strauss 1990). This view suggests that theory is not forced in to data. Instead, theory emerges from data. In the process of building theory, the grounded theorist is supposed to accept the nature of continuously evolving theory.

According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), grounded theory highlights the active role of the persons in shaping the worlds they live in and the notions of change and process. This approach also emphasizes the continuous interaction and the immersion of the researcher with the data. I did not understand this aspect until I started my data collection and the process of making sense of them simultaneously. I constructed data with my respondents, reflected on them, and was continuously analyzing them. It is a process of living and reliving with the data. Looking back, I feel that the strongest emotional affiliation with my inquiry process lies with the collection and making sense of data. I now can feel the meaning of being immersed in, and with data, by moving backward and forward between data and analysis. I understood that grounded theorists are not supposed to collect thin, unfocussed data (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). This particular characteristic is very different from the traditional, linear, one-way model of research, where the researchers gather all the data, and then get down to analysis (Robson, 2002). Robson, commenting on the cyclical nature of collecting and analyzing data mentions that this process is closer to the “*common-sense approach*” through which one would try to understand complex experience (Robson, 2002:193). Nevertheless,

I argue that this ‘common-sense’ characteristic contributes to the complexity as well as the richness of the process of analysis, helping create novel categories continuously. When the researcher is in search of an evolving theory, which is not assumed to be tested or verified, the built up theory can be modified and reformed continuously by using cyclical analysis (Charmaz, 2003; Glaser, 1992). The building up of a theory does not complete the researching process. Instead, theory becomes only a particular step of the complex process of constructing knowledge.

The use of theoretical sampling is another characteristic which enabled me to represent the empirical world in a more authentic manner. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990: 176) theoretical sampling is ‘*sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven the theoretical relevance to the evolving theory.*’ Very briefly, theoretical sampling refers to the process where by the collection of data decides further sampling or data collection. That means the sample is emerging rather than preconceived. Therefore, in this inquiry, the sample was decided by the process of data saturation. The meaning of data saturation in doing this thesis refers to the moment, when I found that the stories constructed with the

respondents, added no more new themes in relation to the main focus of the study (Glaser, 1978). This way of sampling enriched the process of constructing knowledge in this thesis, since it ensured variation and process as well as density and depth of focus on the phenomenon under study.

4.3.2: Flexible and Durable

Flexibility and durability which encapsulates the process of grounded theory approach attracts the researchers with constructivist perspectives in doing research. Charmaz (2002) notes that even though the original writers have given clear steps of conducting grounded theory research, in practice, the process is less linear, and more multi-dimensional. I experienced flexibility in relation to the method of data collection, theoretical sampling, and studying situations rather than specific research questions. In this inquiry, my focus was not on testing a hypothesis, but on studying conditions, people who are acting in contexts, and their meanings and actions. This focus, together with the practice of theoretical sampling continuously brought forward new questions and insights into the inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The flexibility consequently suggested that the process of inquiring can not be rigid. This resulted in durability in grounded theory I used in this study. As Charmaz (2000, 2003) highlights, grounded theorists can go back to the field several times to modify or refine their analyses according to the changes in the conditions as further data is gathered. I have been doing this refining and modifying throughout my sojourn of this inquiry. Now, I feel it has given me new insights, illuminating the whole process of doing this study.

Furthermore, the statements in grounded theory are probabilities and thus, not verifications (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 1990, 1995). These very characteristics cater to the fact that the grounded theorists are not aiming at reliability, validity and causality in their research. Instead, they emphasize variability, change, complexity, and process which are characteristic of human life. These qualities, based on the belief that the truths regarding the world are ever changing accounts of variability, highlight the durability of grounded theory. All these characteristics are finely wedded with my research stance which aims at articulating trustworthy narratives of alternative truths in this changing world.

Nevertheless, I do not ignore the criticisms against grounded theory. Many argue that grounded theory is rationalistic with its positivistic world view and the rigid procedure of doing research which aim at objectivity (Charmaz, 2002). Original writings by Strauss and Corbin and Glaser seem to advocate positivistic epistemology and realistic ontology. This implies that they believe in an external reality that the researcher can discover in this world. Glaser's belief in an external reality that can be discovered through research is highlighted through his proposals for discussing data. He thinks that the realities the researchers aim to build up are inherent. Therefore, he emphasizes coding the data, and using comparative methods step by step. Strauss and Corbin try to achieve this external reality by analyzing the question, hypothesizing, and using rigid methodological application (Charmaz, 2002).

At the same time, grounded theory approach has not been able to escape the criticisms for being closer to natural science research rather than to naturalistic inquiries. However, such criticisms, as Charmaz (2002) maintains arise as a result of certain features of grounded theory such as the language used in the method. For instance, grounded theory relies heavily on terms which are

associated with quantitative research such as axial coding, verification, open coding which resembles the logico-deductive methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). However, one may defend this criticism by arguing that grounded theory was so revolutionary for its time and that it had to use certain terms, which were accessible to quantitative research, which was the dominant way of doing research, during that time.

Another question regarding grounded theory is the nature of the process of coding and whether it fractures data in analysis. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) there are reasons for giving prominence for analysis of data, by fracturing them through the creation of codes and categories as the researcher defines themes within the data. It further helps the researcher avoid remaining immersed in anecdotes and stories, adopting subjects' perspectives, and being overwhelmed by voluminous data. On the other hand, it helps create a way for the researcher to organize and interpret data.

Charmaz (in Denzin and Lincoln; 2000:521) points out that criticisms on grounded theory suggest that it has its limits apart from its capabilities. Accordingly, grounded theory:

“(a) Limits entry into subjects’ worlds and thus, reduces understanding of their experience; (b) curtails representation of both the social world and subjective experience; (c) relies upon the viewer’s authority as expert observer; and (d) posits a set of objectivist procedures on which the analysis rests”

These criticisms as well as the rationalistic and positivistic perspectives embodied in grounded theory, urged me to turn toward a much more applicable grounded theory which enables me to address the process of constructing knowledge according to my ontological and epistemological stance. Hence, I chose to employ constructivist grounded theory in the process of doing this inquiry.

4.3.3: Constructivist grounded Theory

My approach to constructivist grounded theory, which is built upon constructivist methods of constructing knowledge, is informed by

Charmaz' ideas (2002). In this approach I assume; (a) that there are multiple realities in existence, (b) data reflect the joint construction of the research participants, including my self, the researcher, (c) I can get influenced by the different subjects behind me as well as my respondents, (d) I would explicitly provide an interpretive portrayal or a representation of the world I am studying, and not an exact replica of it.

By contrast to the views of Strauss and Corbin (1990), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978), I highlight that I did not go to the field as a theoretical vacuum. Instead, I emphasize that the process of constructing knowledge with my respondents was shaped, and reshaped by my theoretical, ontological as well as epistemological stance in doing research. Further, I question their view that data is 'real' and that data can represent objective facts about a knowledgeable world. Furthermore, I reject the idea that data speak for themselves, and that categories and theories within data are awaiting the researchers' identification of them. Instead, in this inquiry I experienced that categories and meanings of the data emerged from my interaction with data as well as my questioning about data. I view that data analysis is a construction that locates

data in time, place, culture, and context as well as the reflections of my thinking as a human being, and a researcher. I agree with Nagel, (1986, in Riessman, 1993) when he notes that there is no view from no where. Therefore, this thesis constitutes one particular interpretation, or a particular representation among multiple interpretations about the data, constructed in this inquiry.

Having that mentioned, I bring this argument about my choice of using grounded theory in doing this study, to a closure. Next, I describe the strategy I have chosen to construct data with my respondents.

4.4: Active Interviewing

This discussion describes how and why active interviewing, as a method of data collection enables me to access the knowledge I am constructing in this thesis. I organize my discussion around three key issues. First, I make a brief note to mention what is meant by active interviewing, why, and how I came to choose active interviewing as the method of data collection. Second, I argue how

active interviewing can differ from other types of interviewing, highlighting two main epistemological stances; meaning is socially constituted and what passes for knowledge is itself a product of interaction and that interview is an active encounter among the participants, who are interpretively active through out interview process. Finally, I reflect on how my personal, cultural and political locations have positioned me in this research process, and its impact on the process of knowledge construction.

4.4.1: What is Active Interviewing?

This discussion begins with a brief mentioning of the meaning of active interviewing as it is viewed in literature as well as in this thesis. I then reflect on how my personal location has encouraged me to understand active interviewing as the appropriate method to construct knowledge in the process of doing this inquiry.

Active interviewing came to be an important focus among social researchers, mainly due to the recent “linguistic turn” in social inquiry-an interest shared by post modernist, post structuralist,

constructionist, and ethnomethodologist perspectives. These perspectives in different degrees believe that meaning is socially constituted and all knowledge is created from the action taken to obtain it. They further suggest that knowledge itself is a product of interaction among human beings (Garfinkel 1967, in Holstein and Gubrium 1995:5). In the meantime, there is an emerging interest in many fields on the role played by the context, culture, and cultural assumptions in making sense out of an interview encounter (Mishler, 1986, 1991; Briggs, 1986; Riessman, 1993). Taking these characteristics into account, social inquirers have written about the main features of active interviewing. According to Holstein and Gubrium (1995:4), in active interviewing:

“Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably active. Each is involved in meaning- making work. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge-treasures of information awaiting excavation-as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers”

This portrays interviewing as an active encounter of meaning making, through the joint construction of knowledge both by the researcher as well as the respondents.

Silverman (1997:121) describes that:

“active interviewing is a form of interpretive practice involving respondent and interviewer as they articulate ongoing interpretive structures, resources, and orientations with what Garfinkle (1967) calls ‘particle reasoning’ ...while reality is continually under construction, it is assembled using interpretive resources at hand”

This interpretation also speaks about interviewing as an interactive encounter between the researcher and the respondents in which knowledge is evolved and assembled. Therefore, it is evident that active interviewing emphasizes the interactive, joint construction of contextual meanings through the interpretive practice of the interviewer and the respondents. According to Silverman (1997), how knowledge is being constructed is important as well as what is constructed in an active interview encounter.

Having described that, I now move on to discuss how and where the idea of active interviewing originated in the process of this study. There are two major reasons that gave me the main clue for conducting active interviewing in this inquiry. First, the main purpose of doing this inquiry, and the epistemological stance on doing research. Second, my life experience as a daughter of a journalist.

I begin with the story of how my personal location as a daughter of a journalist shaped the choice of the method I use to construct knowledge described here. Reflecting on my life experience, I understand that the notion of active interviewing had been around my life since my childhood. My father had been a journalist, who was interested in investigating and writing about historical issues; about regional Gods, historical places and mystic stories about people, which have become popular in the community. Mostly, he spent time talking to people who could give him clues or information to build up his stories. He either invited people to our house, or went out into the community to meet people and talk with them. These conversations always took place in a very relaxed manner, over a cup of tea. My father never called these occasions

interviews. While talking with them, he would make some notes in his diary, never calling them data. Of course, those days I had no idea about doing research. However, now, reflecting on that experience, I feel my father was actively interviewing his respondents to construct his stories, which were finally produced as narratives of the community.

Thus, my perspective regarding research interviewing has been informed and shaped by my life experience. Above all, active interviewing appealed to me primarily as a method of constructing data, which can address my research topic, throwing light on my epistemological stance. As I have described earlier in this chapter, I believe that knowledge about this world is always in the process of being constructed. It is an active, meaningful process, which is continuously reshaped, and reconstructed through human interaction as well as the particular context in which knowledge is being constructed.

There are three main characteristics embedded in active interviewing, which resonate with my epistemological stance;

contextual meanings of the stories narrated by respondents, process of joint construction of meaning between the respondents, presence of multiple voices of the respondents and the interviewer in making sense of the interview encounter.

4.4.2: Meaning in Context

Human experience is personal as well as socially constructed (Sarbin, 1986). Human experience, therefore, can be given meaning within the context rather than in isolated, decontextualised verbal exchanges. The basic premise of argument in using active interviewing in this study is based on the above two issues in relation to human experience. Likewise, this study considers that interviews need to be considered as speech events, or speech activities, particular types of discourse, guided, and framed by the appropriateness and the relevance (Mishler, 1986). What I mean by speech act in this thesis is related to Gumperz's views regarding speech acts (Gumperz, 1982:166 in Mishler, 1986). According to him a speech activity refers to:

“...a set of social relationships enacted about a set of schemata in relation to some communicative goal”.

Considering these issues, I emphasize that interview is a social encounter with a particular purpose, where meanings emerge, develop, and are shaped by the discourse and context.

Similar views in relation to interviewing have been addressed by Mishler (1986). He argues that the meanings constructed during interviews, the speech acts, and the meaning of questions and answers are contextually grounded. He establishes that discourse and meaning must be restored to a central place in theoretical and empirical studies of human experience. Consequently, questioning and answering in interviews should be understood as ways of speaking that are grounded on culturally shared, and often, tacit assumptions about how to express and understand beliefs, feelings, and intentions. Mishler refers to this knowledge as the ordinary language competence and notes that in an interview, the interviewee and the interviewer are talking together to make sense out of the interview situation. His argument is that the broad cultural, and local sub-cultural norms, and frameworks of meanings should not be neglected in interview processes. Disagreeing with the procedure of the standard method of interviewing he notes that in the mainstream research the respondents' answers are disconnected

from the socio-cultural contexts of meaning. He also points out that each answer in the mainstream research interview is a fragment, removed from the organized discourse of the interview, as well as the life setting of the interviewee. Similarly, Miller (1996, in Silverman, 1997) argues that narratives which emerge in interview contexts are situated in social worlds and they come out of worlds that exist outside of the interview itself.

Related ideas have been presented by Holstein and Gubrium, (1995, 2002) and they suggest that interview subjects construct social worlds apart from narrative worlds through interviews. Making meaning of respondents' views regarding a research question undergoes numerous levels of representations, starting from the moment of the primary experience of the encounter between the respondent and the interviewer, until the final textual representation of the researcher. This makes it clear that the mere framing of the question to gain the right answer, minimizing distractions from the interview question itself is not going to help very much in making sense of respondents' stories. Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 2) sums up this idea as follows:

“Highly refined interview technologies streamline, standardize, and sanitize the process, but, despite their methodological sophistication, they persistently ignore the most fundamental epistemological questions: where does this knowledge come from, and how is it derived?”

They propose that the process through which meaning is produced in interviews is as important as the meaning that is produced. This has been convincingly put forward by Holstein and Gubrium (2002:14) quoting Sola Pool, a prominent critic of public opinion polling, that the social milieu in which communication occurs in an interview modifies what a respondent dares to say, what he or she thinks, as well as what he or she chooses to say. Therefore, Pool has noted that there is no neutral, non-social, uninfluenced situation during interviews.

Barker and Johnson (1998:230) argue that interview is a particular medium for enacting or displaying people’s knowledge of cultural forms, as questions, far from being neutral, are couched in the

cultural repertoires of all participants, indicating how people make sense of their social world and of each other.

The other important aspect regarding active interviewing is the process of joint construction of meaning among the respondents. This will be discussed in the next section.

4.4.3: Joint Constructing of Meaning

I argue that the interview discourse employed in this thesis is a joint construction between the respondents and myself, the researcher. Being informed by the constructionist perspective as well as the narrative approach to doing research, I assume that the meanings constructed in the interview encounter is continuously developed, and shaped by the speakers.

Very often, the literature on interviewing suggests that the interviewer needs to maximize the flow of the ‘valid’, ‘reliable’ information while minimizing the distortions of what the

respondents know. Richardson, (1994) referring to interviewing in phenomenographic tradition claims that interview situations which can be influenced by the interviewer behaviour and the context are 'poorly' constructed. Contrary to these common assumptions, this thesis highlights that interview situations, being authentic encounters of meaning making with a specific purpose, get influenced by the behaviour of the respondents. The reason is that meaning is jointly constructed by the respondents, within a particular social, cultural context, which can shape the meanings constructed. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2002), construction of realities during the interviews is a co-construction between the respondent and the interviewer. Mishler (1986) emphasizes the need to bring the respondent more fully into the interview situation to make him or her more of an equal partner in the interview conversation, which he refers as empowering the respondents. He further suggests that interviews need to be viewed as interactional accomplishments, where the participants jointly construct in words, and their senses of the developing interview agenda. All these ideas have been summed up by Pool (1957 in Holstein and Gubrium, 1997:14) when he identifies that:

“Every interview {besides being an information-gathering occasion} is an interpersonal drama with a developing plot”.

Next, I argue that the meanings jointly constructed during the interview process are informed by the subjects behind the respondents.

4.4.4: Multiple Voices- Stories Comprehensible Locally

The process of active interviewing highlights the presence of multiple voices, or the subjects behind the respondents as well as behind the interviewer. For instance, in this interview process my contribution as the interviewer was informed by my multiple locations; as an overseas student, a mother, a woman and other experiences of my life. Similarly, the stories constructed by my respondents were necessarily influenced by their life experiences, age, gender and their personal philosophy of learning. Therefore, in the process of interviewing and analyzing my data, I am not interested in judging the ‘truth’ value of interview responses in terms of the answers or the ideas of the respondents. From a more

standard point of view of conducting interviews, the truth value of the interview responses are assessed in terms of reliability ; the degree to which the questioning will provide the same answers whenever and wherever the interview is carried out, and the validity, the extent to which the interview yields the ‘correct’ answers (Kirk and Miller,1986). However, when the interview is viewed as a dynamic process, giving prominence to the process of meaning making, and joint construction of meaning among participants, different criteria apply for truth value. Hence, I argue that in the construction of meaning in this thesis, I am concerned about how meaning is constructed, and the meaningful linkages associated with the situation of making meaning. What is significant is the ability of the respondents to convey situated experiential realities in terms that they are comprehensible locally.

Therefore, my intention of employing active interviewing is to construct stories with my respondents, about their experience of being learners in a context of intercultural higher education. I use these storytelling processes to achieve the main purpose of doing this inquiry.

At this point it is noteworthy that active interviewing stands in contrast with some types of interviews. As Kvale (1996:126-127) notes, interviews differ in the openness of their purpose, their degree of structure, to which degree they are explanatory or hypothesis testing, and whether they seek description or interpretation. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) mention six types of interviews; standardized interviews, in-depth interviews, ethnographic interviews, elite interviews, life history interviews and focus group interviews. I do not intend to compare and contrast active interviewing with all these other types of interviews. What I want to emphasize is that the main characteristics, the purpose as well as the function of active interviewing differ from those which consider interviews as occasions of information transfer and collection. They further believe that biases as well as subjectivities of participants', and the researcher's should be minimized to maintain the objective quality of the interview situation as well as the information collected (Cohen and Manion et al. 2000). Thus, active interviewing will clearly be different in its purpose and function from standardized open-ended interviews and closed quantitative interviews.

Bringing the discussion about active interviewing as the method of constructing data in this inquiry to a closure, I turn to talk about sampling that is employed in constructing knowledge in this inquiry.

4.5: Opportunity Sampling

This argues for my choice of opportunity sampling, highlighting its ability to address epistemological as well as ontological stance in constructing knowledge in this inquiry.

Starting the argument, I need to clarify the meaning of ‘opportunity sampling’. Opportunity sampling is a convenience sample, which is used to sample a particular situation, as well as important characteristics of that particular situation, rather than sampling people. My sample in this inquiry is whoever available, convenient and accessible in the situation, which I am studying (Garfinkel, 1967). This particular situation I intend to study has been defined and decided by the main focus of my inquiry: people’s experiences of learning are mediated with cultural scripts and that these scripts

differ in different cultures. The opportunity sample I am using for the purpose of constructing knowledge in this inquiry comprises situations of learning of MA and PhD students in the Institute of Education, University of London.

This said, I mention that very often the naturalistic inquirers have been criticized for not using the sampling issues seriously. According to Gobo (2004), most of the arguments about sampling highlight that sampling processes need to address the issues of ‘generalizability’ and ‘representativeness’. According to Gobo, these two notions are given different meanings, depending on the main focus of any particular study. Of course, my use of opportunity sample may be criticized for the absence of notions such as ‘representativeness’ and ‘generalizability’, which are considered essential characteristics in terms of sampling in research processes. However, in my inquiry, I am looking at these ideas in a different manner that matches with my theoretical stance of doing research as well as the main focus in this inquiry. I argue that in my inquiry, I try to achieve my main purpose by employing opportunity sampling, interpreting ‘representativeness’ and ‘generalisability’ as they make sense in my process of research.

I start with ‘generalizability’ and my use of opportunity sampling. I argue that I am not interested in generalizing a specific group or a population in constructing knowledge in this thesis. Instead, I focus on generalizing a nature of a process, emphasizing on situations, contexts, and incidents. Such generalizations are based on the notion of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I am not highlighting on statistical logic of choosing a sample.

Moving on to the issue of representativeness I hold that the meaning of the word representation in doing research is shaped by the main purpose of using a particular sample in the process of constructing knowledge. In my inquiry, I employ an opportunity sample to construct knowledge, in an alternative manner, which differs from the standard ways of constructing knowledge. In the meantime, my purpose of talking with the respondents is to construct knowledge with them, about their experience of learning in a particular context. Therefore, I do not sample people. Instead, I sample situations of learning in a context of intercultural Higher Education. In this inquiry, I am only interested in making my sample representative of the experience of a particular situation, within a particular context. As Hammersley (1992) argues what is

significant in choosing a particular sample is what the researcher intends to do with the sampling in a particular inquiry. Agreeing with Hammersley's view, I emphasize that opportunity sample can address my main purpose of doing this inquiry.

So far, I have been arguing for my choice of approaches and methodology. Having these described, next I highlight the kind of criteria which apply in understanding the process of doing the thesis discussed in this thesis.

4. 6: Plausible Stories: Which Criteria Matter?

This is an argument to emphasize on the kind of criteria which matter in the process of constructing and reconstructing knowledge in this thesis.

“The naturalistic inquirer soon becomes accustomed to hearing charges that naturalistic studies are undisciplined: that he or she is guilty of ‘sloppy’ research engaging in ‘merely subjective’ observations, responding indiscriminately to the ‘loudest bangs or

brightest lights'. Rigour, it is asserted, is not the hallmark of naturalism" Lincoln and Guba, 1985:289).

This quotation suggests that there are charges against human science inquiries, which take a different path from that of conventional studies. These paragraphs examine how this study, being a naturalistic inquiry, look at these challenges, while highlighting an alternative set of criteria. Bruner, (1985) holds each of the ways of knowing has its own operating principles and its own criteria. According to him, the criteria that are applicable to paradigmatic and narrative ways of knowing differ radically in their procedures for establishing the truth. For instance, the paradigmatic mode of doing research looks for formal verifications of truth explications which are context and time free. And aims at universal epistemological question of how to know the 'truth'. In the paradigmatic mode, the journey of the search for the "truth" is explained in terms of formal, mathematical system of description. Since the paradigmatic studies aim at discovering a single, tangible "truth", in a formal manner, the notions such as generalisability, objectivity, validity and reliability have come to be essential in the

vocabulary in doing paradigmatic studies. Of course, the emphasis on these issues in doing research, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), has been the major effort of reductionists and formalists. This effort, in their point of view, highlights a depersonalised, correct view of the world, irrespective of any personal belief. As Schon (1987) points out, the reductionists and rationalists in their interest in objective truth have been encouraged by their preoccupation with the notion of certainty.

Apart from reductionism and rationalism, the positivist paradigm and the structuralist paradigm have shown a great interest in concepts such as 'objective truth', 'causality', 'generalizability' and 'rationality'. Next, I describe why and how this inquiry alternates such concepts.

4.6.1: Subjectively Objective, Trustworthy, Multiple Truths

I argue that this study constructs knowledge through an alternative manner to that of the traditional research, and hence different criteria apply in understanding the research process discussed in

this thesis. I argue that three are four significant characteristics worth paying attention to, when invoking criteria regarding the process of this study.

First, trustworthiness. In the process of constructing knowledge in this thesis, I alternate the concepts of validity and reliability with trustworthiness. What is meant by trustworthiness? The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple; how can an inquirer persuade him or her as well as others that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to? What criteria invoked and what arguments mounted to? (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They further establish that narratives can be believed, when it can be credited with conveying convincingly that the events occurred, and were felt, in the ways the narrator is asserting.

My main method of constructing knowledge in this inquiry process is constructing stories with my respondents, during active interviewing encounters. This process will construct personal as well as social stories, which are context bound, reflexive, and unique. Therefore, I do not expect these constructions to highlight

causality since I am aware of the complexity of making sense of the stories people narrate in day-to-day life. They are stories about unique individuals, and these stories are framed by various other socio-cultural factors, within the interview context as well as out of this particular context. I question how far daily life of individuals will narrate 'valid', and 'reliable' stories? (Appendix 2 includes two extracts of stories taken from interview transcriptions).

Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) suggest fidelity as an alternative for 'truth' in narrative research. They speak about fidelity, betweenness, and believability in evaluating and practicing narrative as an inquiry. They further point out that it is not possible to judge the validity or contribution of different research perspectives in terms of the ground assumptions of any set of perspectives. The process of doing research is self-justifying. My argument is that narrative ways of knowing the world requires maintaining fidelity, believability and plausibility which amounts to trustworthiness rather than validity and reliability as they are employed in paradigmatic mode of constructing knowledge.

Second, I highlight that this thesis does not claim universal truths, which are context free and time free. Instead, it articulates multiple truths coming out of plausible stories which are temporal. They will always give voice to the teller's point of view as well as my point of view while interpreting them. I view such stories as non-rational. These stories would convey no causalities that lead to a single truth that is applicable in any context. Consequently, the experiences narrated by different tellers, with different points of view, will very often, illuminate multiple versions of 'truth'. Further, this inquiry process believes that what counts as knowledge is only a human construction and hence, truth and reality gain only a relative meaning. I propose that the readers of this thesis need to expect multiple versions of reality instead of universal truth.

The third significant factor is that the notion of generalisability would not be applicable in relation to the knowledge constructed in living this inquiry. I do not intend to claim that the knowledge constructed in this inquiry process articulate ultimate, replicable truth regarding the area of research, in which I am engaged in this inquiry. I emphasize that I am not going to test any theories in this study, since I believe that construction of knowledge, is an ongoing

process. This thesis articulates that theory emerges in the process of doing this research and the emergent theory or theories can be further refined. Hence, my simple exploration in this study does not speak about a universal truth.

Of course, then, the inevitable question is if I intend to explore a truth which is particularly applicable to my simple project, what is the purpose of this study? How can it contribute to the world of knowledge? The answer is that I am generalising the nature of a process through theoretical sampling rather than generalizing a particular truth about a population or a particular case. Hence, I try to achieve transferability rather than a universally applicable truth. This kind of generalisation can be called naturalist generalisation or analytical generalization (Gobo, 2004).

The fourth characteristic that needs to be addressed is related to the notion of “objectivity”, which is considered very important in paradigmatic mode of knowing the world. Objectivity, which is maintained in a paradigmatic inquiry, by distancing the researcher

from the value-free knowledge he or she discovers, will not be present in the same manner in this inquiry process. Nevertheless, one may not find the process of constructing knowledge in this thesis as merely subjective. I argue that the process of doing this inquiry can not be identified as merely subjective or objective. Rowen (1981, in Lincoln and Guba 1985), questioning about how the researchers should think, what logic they need to bring to bear in the research process, and how to move back and forth between theory and research, draws upon a proposal of consciousness. Elaborating on this proposal, Rowen has suggested that the nature of carrying out inquiries need to highlight the quality of being “objectively subjective” (Rowen, 1981:116, in Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Rowen, to be subjective in research processes means to be at the mercy of our feelings, and to be open to manipulation by dominant personalities. Being objective is to be interested only in facts and what can be proved true or false in a mechanical manner. Furthermore, he notes that the tight control that is implied by these two ends leads to over control, and hence bars the development of construction of knowledge. He proposes that we need to be subjectively objective in doing our inquiries.

I think what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have mentioned about over-identification of the researcher self with the subjects he or she studies harmonize with the views of Rowen. Critically reflecting on Willis's work *Learning to Labour* (1977), they highlight that Willis has failed to critically and intellectually poise between familiarity and strangeness in his research process. He has over-identified himself with the 12 boys he has studied without critically distancing his researcher-self from what and whom he has been studying. They note that this has resulted in flawed analysis. Eventhough this particular comment is about an ethnographic study, I cited it here since it delineates the need for balancing between the subjective self and the objective self in doing research. In this process of inquiry, I am trying to be objectively subjective by being reflexive and closely distancing my researcher-self from the process of doing this thesis (I discuss reflexivity in chapter 8).

Having described the criteria that count in understanding the knowledge construction process, I bring this chapter to a closure. The next chapter discusses the process of constructing knowledge through interviewing.

Chapter 5: Talking Stories: Constructing Knowledge with My Respondents

This chapter will provide the reader with an explicit account of the process of constructing the kind of knowledge that is in focus in this inquiry. I start discussing the how and the why of approaching my respondents to construct knowledge that is described in this thesis. This discussion will be followed by an argument on my views on ethics of doing interviews and justification of my choice of inviting the respondents to construct knowledge with me during interview situations, drawing on my theoretical project in doing interviews. Toward the end of this chapter I explain the act of doing interviews.

5.1: Approaching Respondents

This section describes the way I chose to approach my respondents, highlighting the theoretical and ethical issues.

5.1.1: Addressing Ethical Issues

This discussion argues for my choice of ethics in approaching the respondents as well as constructing knowledge with them.

Ethical aspects of doing research are very significant at the stage of planning for data collection. Every time I tried to think of ways to access my respondents, the colourless A4 paper, hanging on the notice board in the research room came into my mind. It gives a list of the ethics a researcher, researching in the UK should follow. In the meantime, I downloaded some other guidelines significant in different disciplines. Before embarking on my field work I almost memorized what these guidelines suggest; confidentiality, gaining access, dual relationship in the work context: professional and the researcher, protection of participants, conflict of values...

Nevertheless, the experience of doing this inquiry urged me to question the practical aspect of some of the issues that appear in the form of such lists. At the same time, my epistemological and ontological stance of constructing knowledge motivated me to

rethink the lists of ethics produced by various disciplines in terms of conducting interviews. For instance, written documents promising confidentiality, are supposed to maintain the confidentiality with and about the respondents' data, according to these listed set of ethics. Moreover, this kind of formal access to respondents is suggestive of the kind of power and authority held by the researcher as a person, who is distant from the respondents. Since my data collection is centered on natural interaction between the respondents and the researcher, I began to question the role of a written document of confidentiality, which symbolizes authority. While constructing stories during active interviewing with the fellow students, trust and mutual understanding would supercede such kind of assumed power (McNamee and Gergen, 1999). I find no social distance between myself and my respondents. Both myself and the respondents play the roles of overseas learners within the context of a British university. Hence, I did not find any reason to access the respondents in a formal manner, creating a power relation, which does not actually exist between us. Of course I am aware that one can argue that the researcher can not deny the kind of power he or she holds in relation to the respondents (Tuckman, 1972). I would counter argue emphasizing that the issue of power

matters in the way the researcher interprets it as well as the interpretation of the kind of relationship between the researcher and the respondents. The active interviewing agenda differs from the accepted, structural arrangement of doing interviews in which the interviewer seeks information and the interviewee is expected to supply that information (Mishler, 1986). There is a measure of control and power exercised by the researcher in his attempt to lift out complete chunks of the informants' worlds. Contrary to this view, I look at my interviews as interactive situations where meanings are jointly constructed by myself as the researcher, and my respondents. Hence, formally accessing the respondents will contribute to a kind of artificiality to my conversations. This can affect how we construct knowledge as well as what we construct as knowledge. Therefore, what matters more is the moral responsibility between the researcher and the respondents, in constructing knowledge interactively through active interviewing. For instance, even though I did not use written forms of consent or confidentiality, I mentioned my respondents that the stories we are constructing have a specific purpose, and that the confidentiality of stories we talk will be maintained. They were further aware of the publicability of the knowledge we construct during the interviews.

Having highlighted my views on ethics in doing this inquiry, I next describe the kind of relationship I developed as a means of contacting respondents.

5.1.2: A Researcher from No Where? A Fellow Student?

As I have described in the previous section, my attempt to access respondents was framed by the epistemological as well as the theoretical issues that are significant in my inquiry. Now, I describe how I made use of such issues to access my respondents.

Accessing the respondents in a formal manner would not match with my research design. Some advised that I email the research proposal to students and that those who are interested will email me back, giving their consent to participate in my interview. I remembered how I deleted most of the emails I got during the past years from the students, who have emailed me their research plans, asking to participate either in their interviews or to fill in their questionnaires. I was not interested in reading a research plan of some one else, without a purpose. Sending formal letters requesting

their consent to participate in my interview will not fit my interview agenda. Such formal approaches to respondents can affect my main purpose of coauthoring the stories with the respondents, about their personal experience of learning. Why should they unfold a story about their personal experience to a woman who is said to be a researcher, a Sri Lankan, who approaches them very formally? We, as human beings do not tell stories to each other if there is no purpose and no mutual trust between each other.

I remembered how Holliday has written about the predicament of a researcher, who has approached her respondents in a formal manner. Holliday (2002) convincingly describes an instance where the accepted ethics related to formal relationship of researcher-researched did not work, quoting the experience of Shamim, an American PhD student, doing research in a Pakistani Secondary school. Shamim's initial attempt to collect data has failed due to her formal approach to access the staff in the school. She has formally discussed the research plan and followed the set code of conduct of a researcher in developing her researcher role with the respondents. And none of the teachers in the school had paid any attention to her research plan, or what she was going to do in their school as a

researcher. For the teachers in that Pakistani school, Shamim was only an American woman. Holliday describes how Shamim had later transferred her researcher self to a friend, a woman, who is married to a Muslim man, for the purpose of approaching the respondents in a more authentic manner. With this switching over, her respondents have begun to treat her as someone known to them, a friend, rather than an alien researcher from nowhere, collecting information about them. Thus, Holliday notes that the role of the researcher is suspected in most cases whereas the role of a friend is not (Holliday, 2002). And that there is a general tradition of doing favours for friends without expecting anything in return.

Holliday's description encouraged me to critically question the formal way of approaching my respondents. I understood that formal forwarding of my self as a researcher will not help meet my research purpose. I thought of making use of my own location in the context of Institute of Education as another fellow student from overseas, who shares the same miseries and laughter, working part time, trying to eat sandwiches for lunch and sleeping two three hours a day. My effort was to make the respondents feel that interview situations are friendly conversations, where they can

construct stories significant for them and for me. Hence, I was conscious never to use the word 'interview' when I try to make appointments to do interviewing. I would very casually ask them:

"When shall we meet again?" or "When are we going to talk about our stories"?

Likewise, I approached them as a friend, a fellow student and my research interviewing started with my friends. Quite interestingly, things went on very smoothly. I felt the strength of being simply a human being, without masking myself as a researcher when I want to understand the world through words. Once I started interviewing my friends, they introduced me to their friends. One day my supervisor asked me to participate in one of his MA lessons, introduced me to his students as one of his doctoral students, who is interested in talking with the students about their experience of being learners in this institute. It worked very well. I had tea with them during the break, and talked a little bit about my research when they asked. Each student, including the native students gave me their email addresses and their mobile numbers so that I could

meet them later. I just emailed them or phoned them and we set a date to our talk.

Apart from that, I had another way of getting to know my respondents. I worked part time in the Institute Library and almost all the students who use the library know me as another student and they are usually friendly with me. I made use of these friendships to invite (indirectly) some of the students for my interview situations. Thus, whenever I met them in the canteen or outside the Institute, I would start talking with them and gradually move on to talk about my study.

“I am doing my study on the experience of international students... I mean students like you... who study in this institute... The students normally show an interest to know what I am doing.

“I am trying to explore whether there are different cultural scripts in different cultures in terms of being learners”.

Quite often, they seemed to be very interested in my topic.

“Oh... Very interesting. Is it about how and what we experience here as foreign students. By the way, you said something about a script?”

Then, I described the meaning of “script” very briefly. *“All right. I will tell you what I mean by cultural scripts in this study.”*

“For instance, we Sri Lankan students, have a particular way of going about the relationship with the teachers in our culture. Let us take the particular act of learning inside the classroom. We do not argue critically, against the teacher’s point of view regarding any issue. In our culture, teachers are venerated and therefore, arguing with the teacher is not morally accepted. Teachers are like parents and Gods. So we do not argue with the teachers like the students in this culture I can call that this particular way of going about talking inside the classroom can be an example of our cultural script for talking for learning as well as the script for teacher-student relationship for learning.”

“You know, the meaning of cultural scripts, as I use it in this thesis, emphasizes three elements; context, action and the meaning. Now, in this example, the action is keeping quiet, the context is the

classroom teaching-learning situation, and the meaning is the meaning that arises in relation to the students-teacher interaction for learning, within the Sri Lankan culture.”

Interestingly, such discussions usually developed into narratives about various aspects of our cultures. I felt that the students talk very enthusiastically in a relaxed manner. I make use of such situations to study and reflect upon how narrative constructions of our experiences are framed while two friends are talking. I spent a few minutes after such talks to write down the significant issues those brief conversations brought into light. For instance, I experienced that people do not narrate their experiences to another person unless there is purpose, and motivation to do that. Moreover, narrative construction of meaning is reciprocal. I came to understand that the roles of teller and listener are always being intermingled. Such understandings helped me later to frame my interview situations in an authentic manner, giving more sense to the notion of active interviewing.

At the end of such a discussion I would tell them:

“You know, I am conducting active interviews which are more or less like what we are doing now. I just want you to tell me your story of being an overseas learner in this institute. That means how you go about as a learner. We will just be talking to each other like this”.

When I was talking with fellow students in this manner, there were occasions when they asked me:

“So, can’t we talk now? I do not have anything special to do at the moment”.

Most significantly, their invitation to talk convinced me that they have understood they were involved in a research conversation, with a particular purpose, rather than in a general conversation. At this point I came to know that no further discussion of their understanding was deemed necessary for ethical clarity.

Thus, I felt that my approach to the respondents as a friend went quite in harmony with my theoretical project in conducting active interviews. What is significant is that in the interviews my respondents did not get bored or showed any inconvenience, since I was just another student like them and there is no hierarchy, no power or formality embedded in the interview situation.

One last point is worth considering. The quality of my inquiry may be regarded as vulnerable, on the grounds that my position as another international student, interviewing the fellow international students in the same institution where I study, can shape my way of going about this inquiry (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003; Hobbs and May, 1993). One may argue that the relationship and the familiarity with the respondents can affect what stories they tell me as well as my sense making process of their stories. My response is that it is this very familiarity and the friendly approach to respondents which contributed to the construction of very rich stories in my inquiry. For instance, my prior knowledge and experience as an international student provided guidance as to what knowledge to construct during interview conversations. And the familiarity between the interviewer and the interviewee facilitated meaningful

encounters of knowledge construction, encouraging the respondents to tell me their personal stories with confidence. In the meantime, I had been reflexive about my location in relation to my respondents without getting unnecessarily immersed in our familiarities. I do not intend to mask my multiple locations and their contribution in shaping the kind of knowledge I constructed in this thesis. Of course, as Denzin (1994:503) points out: “[r]epresentation ...is always self-presentation” Moreover, the production of theory has been described as a social activity, which is culturally, socially and historically embedded (Haraway, 1988).

Having described the way I approached the respondents to invite them to talk with me, I will next explain the act of conducting interviews with my respondents.

5.2: Assembling Knowledge interactively

According to (Silverman, 1997), active interviewing means emphasizing more the ways of assembling knowledge. Silverman, taking a stance which is similar to that of Mishler (1986), Garfinkel,

(1967) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), point out that the interview situations characterized by interactional narrative procedures of knowledge construction give prominence to how knowledge is constructed as well as what is constructed. Hence, the discussion which follows will provide an explicit explanation about the process of interviewing. First, I describe the theoretical as well as the pragmatic aspects considered in inviting the respondents to talk about their experience with me. Second, I elaborate on the act of interviewing, emphasizing the active interaction between me as the interviewer and my respondents. Third, I will move on to discuss other significant wider issues regarding interviewing, which contributed to the process of assembling of knowledge.

I begin with my choice of inviting the respondents to participate in my interview conversations.

5.2.1: Tell Me a Story: Starting Interview Conversations.

Framing the start of the conversation with my respondents demanded a lot of thinking. The tacit quality as well as the subtlety

of the main concepts I employ in this inquiry provided me with clues for starting the interview conversation with the respondents. How best can I explore such tacit issues? Which particular way of starting the discussion would help me to co construct stories woven around such subtle issues in an act of interviewing?

In the meantime, my constructivist view point that the world is constantly in the making, shaped my way of going about interviewing in this study. I was more interested in the ways social activities are locally organized and conducted, considering interviewing as a social accomplishment. Moreover, I made use of my reflections on storying the experience of being a Post Graduate student in a British University, three years ago, in the process of framing the invitation to start talking with the respondents. As has been delineated in the introductory chapter, I have often discussed the experience of being a learner in a foreign university with my overseas friends. I remembered that we were storying our experiences to each other, very informally, unfolding whatever episodes significant to our experience as learners. This particular reminiscence intensified my understanding that data is constructed rather than simply collected. Such understandings and reflections

directed me to my choice of inviting the respondents to story their experience of being learners in an overseas university, in a purposeful manner.

There are certain other aspects worth mentioning at this point. Before starting the interview process with the respondents, I did interview myself. This self reflexive act of telling me my story of going about learning in a foreign university took me more than one hour. Interviewing myself provided me with immense insight into the process of conducting active interviewing in terms of storying personal experience. Transcribing of this interview helped me frame and reframe the kind of dialogue, and the relationship I need to maintain with the respondents, during the interview process. This act also revealed me that the idea of telling a story makes interaction authentic while narrowing down the limitations in expressing one's own views on a particular experience. At the same time, inviting the respondents to narrate their experience of learning in an intercultural context helps achieve my purpose of identifying their cultural scripts for learning, since people feel and reflect more on their own cultural ways of going about learning when they encounter different cultures.

Another factor worth mentioning is that at the beginning I was very conscious to see whether the respondents would understand my invitation to tell a *story* in an interview situation. Significantly, not a single respondent wanted me to clarify the meaning of my invitation. I conducted thirty interviews, (appendix 1 includes a table of the interviewees with their pseudonyms, the country they come from and their level of study) `and most of the respondents mentioned me that they preferred my way of going about the interview situation rather than asking them to answer a series of questions in a decontextualised manner For instance, Sheng-Yu, the young university lecturer from China, expressed his feelings toward my approach at the outset of the interview.

Sheng-Yu; *“Ooo... You want me to tell you my story of going about learning in this institute? So, you are not using a question paper? That is interesting. You know, I normally do not like to be interviewed. It is very boring....just to answer the question the interviewer asks. ...not real. But I like the way you put it and I feel I can enjoy telling my story to you”* (Interview, Sheng-Yu; 04.04.05).

Such comments confirmed me that the absence of formally structured questions helps make the interview situations more meaningful occasions for collaborative construction of knowledge. I felt Mason (2002:228, in May 2002) has been quite correct when she notes that “*individuals do not inhabit abstract and generalized social worlds (even when they are being interviewed)*”.

The brief discussion above highlights how my choice of inviting my respondents to tell me a story, enabled the interview situations to address my main purpose in doing this inquiry in harmony with my epistemological and ontological stances. The discussion which follows will tell you about the act of interviewing.

5.2.2: Playing My Part: Which Bits Matter?

This section articulates how I played my role in the interview conversations with the respondents to make the interview encounters actively interactive. First, I had to identify cultural scripts and cultural scripts for learning while in conversation with my respondents. Second, while identifying cultural scripts for

learning, I had to engage in co constructing new knowledge with my respondents in an interactive manner, to achieve the main purpose of doing interviews. This section discusses these two aspects in some depth, highlighting how the process of doing interviews constructed the knowledge described in this thesis.

Identifying cultural scripts for learning, while co-constructing knowledge with the respondents, was very challenging. I have discussed the nature and the meaning of the notion of cultural scripts as well as cultural scripts for learning in chapter two. Here, I elaborate the process of identifying cultural scripts for learning in Higher Education, as the respondents narrate them during interview conversations. Of course, there were very few occasions when respondents talked about scripts for learning directly. Very often they would go on telling their stories with explanations of cultural scripts, cultural norms and beliefs and sometimes they talk stories in the past, describing the origin of particular cultural scripts for learning in terms of their history. Also, there were very rare occasions when the respondents talked about their idiosyncratic scripts for learning. Hence, I had to be conscious about what they are talking about specifically, through out the interviewing process.

My task during and after the interview situations was to identify which stories are about cultural scripts for learning. Therefore, while being in conversation with the respondents I had to distill whether they are talking about cultural scripts for learning or something else relating to scripts. This of course was a challenge for me especially at the beginning of the process of interviewing.

I begin explaining how I identified cultural scripts for learning in higher education while constructing stories with the respondents. In this discussion I will be using quotations from interview conversations and in these quotations, 'T' refers to Thushari, the interviewer.

First, I talk about the occasions when the respondents story their interaction practices while learning in an overseas university. My task on such occasions was to test my respondents to check whether he or she is talking about interaction practices related to learning or something else.

Roger: *“Sometimes, I do the same course and sitting down with them. I need to start a conversation with another student. ...Even if I speak, they just give a short answer and that puts me off. ...It is very difficult to communicate with the native students. I think that ...they did not know what to do with a foreign student...They were not at all ready to talk to you even for one minute.”*

T: *“You think so? You said that you like to start a conversation with them. Were you trying to interact with them just for social reasons or for some other reasons?”*

Roger: *“Mmm. I think first, I needed to have someone to talk to. I mean... a friend. And of course, I thought that if I had a native friend it would help in my studies since I was completely new to this way of being a learner in higher education”* (interview; Roger, 25.10.2004).

Here, I was checking and testing Roger, the teacher educator from Ghana, doing his PhD at this Institute, for his interaction practices for cultural scripts. I wanted to distinguish whether his need to talk with the native students is a need for social relations or a need for learner relations for learning purposes.

The following example describes how I had to identify recurring patterns in relation to learning in higher education out of explanations of cultural scripts for learning. Abaz, the university teacher from Pakistan was talking about the kind of lessons he is used to in his native universities.

Abaz: “You know, in my country, I mean those days, now of course things have changed a bit, we never have group discussions. No questioning or arguing with the teacher while the lesson is going on. I have something interesting to tell you. There was a teacher who could dictate notes with all the commas and the semicolons and all that. He has given the same notes for years without changing.

T: “Oh... even I have similar experiences in my university life back home. You said that there is no questioning or arguing while the lesson is going on. Shall we talk more about it Abaz?” (interview; Abaz, 30.10.04).

My aim in requesting him to tell more was to establish whether there is a specific script for talking in the classroom for learning in higher education. I wanted to know whether the absence of questioning and arguing in the lessons is a recurring pattern in their way of doing higher education.

Another aspect of identifying cultural scripts was to distinguish between idiosyncratic scripts for learning and cultural scripts for learning. While storying about their experience of learning, the respondents often narrate their personal scripts for learning including their personal beliefs, values and habits of learning. Therefore, I had to know more about some of their stories to know whether they describe personal scripts rather than cultural scripts for learning.

For instance, Kengi, the university teacher from Kenya, doing her PhD in the institute was talking about her relationship with the students.

Kengi: *“My students are very close to me...very happy with me. I always encourage them to argue and be critical. And I think they do.”*

T: *“Now... you said you are close to your students and you encourage them to be critical. Do you think that most of the teachers in your university tell similar stories about their rapport with their students?”* (interview, Kengi, 07.06.05).

Here, I wanted to make sure whether the kind of relationship she has with her students is the common story about teacher-student relationship in higher education in her culture. Therefore, I needed to know whether she is describing her own personal script for going about teaching and learning or a cultural script.

Moreover, there were occasions when the respondents go on giving explanations to particular scripts for learning rather than talking about a particular script. Therefore, while in conversation, I had to check whether they are merely explaining a particular cultural script for learning or talking about cultural scripts for learning.

For instance, Lee, who works in an Arts Theatre in Hong-Kong and doing his MA in the Institute of Education, was narrating me an incident which highlights their role relations with the teachers.

Lee: *“One day during the break, we were down in the café, and the teacher came there after a while. The café was full and there was not a single chair for the teacher to sit... They just said, ‘Hi Bob, all right?’ That is it. None of them wanted to find a chair for him. But my Japanese friend and I made the body movement to find a chair for him. That is the kind of rapport they have with the teacher. Our Asian way is different”* (interview; Lee, 11.01.05).

In this piece of story Lee is describing about an incident of finding a chair for the teacher in a busy cafe. Here, I had to understand whether he was merely explaining a script without talking about a particular script for learning. My concern was to identify whether his description comprises the characteristics of a cultural script; context, action and meaning. As I analyzed his explanation, I understood that the context he describes is teachers and students having tea in the university cafe. And the meaning is the kind of

meaning which was present in the rapport between the teachers and the pupils when they are outside the classroom, and in this context, in a cafe. The action is having tea. Thus, I identified that Lee is talking about a cultural script for teacher pupil relationship outside the classroom situations by identifying that he is describing a particular action, a meaning for that particular action as well as a context where the action and the meaning were present.

Likewise, identifying cultural scripts for learning while the interview conversation is going on was one of the major issues of the process of interviewing. Apart from this, I was engaged in co-authoring the kind of knowledge that was constructed during interviewing.

Next, I move on to describe how I played my role in the process of co-authoring the narratives we constructed through purposefully interactive conversations.

5.2.3: Active Coauthoring: Reflexive note on Interviewing

This discussion reflexively reflects on the interactional narrative nature of the interviewing process. Here, I explain how the knowledge assembled during interview situations was jointly and authentically constructed with the respondents, focusing on the main quest in doing this inquiry.

I started the interview process with one of the Sri Lankan male students who was doing his PhD in this institute. I have briefed him earlier what I am going to explore in my study and my method of constructing knowledge. Thus, on a particular day, around 10 am, we walked down toward the Logan Hall in the Institute of Education. He bought me a cup of tea and I bought two pieces of cake and we sat down leisurely on the big cushion sofas in front of Logan Hall. There was nobody around. I set the minidisk recorder while having a bit of personal chat. After a while we were ready for doing our story telling.

I invited him to story his experience of learning in a British university:

“Saman, can you please tell me your story of going about in this Institute as a learner from overseas?”

I was wondering how Saman’s background as a quantitative researcher, doing research in Economics of Education, would affect his understanding of this “story telling”. He started eating the piece of cake and said:

“Mmm... This tastes a bit like our cakes. You see, I never buy cakes here since they have no taste, no sugar, nothing. All right, now...”

He was beginning to talk with me the story of his experience in this institute of being a learner.

During the next hour and half we had an interestingly focused talk about the story of his experience of learning in the Institute of Education as an overseas student. The most noteworthy aspect was that he seemed more organized, critical and reflexive in this conversation. Of course, both of us were quite relaxed and I was conscious about focusing on the main purpose of the conversation through out.

Saman began to narrate the story of his experience. The interesting aspect in his storying process was that wherever relevant, Saman would get into argument with me over some issue. The normally quiet nature of Saman has been stolen by his story telling. I felt that arguing with him and answering his questions gave me a deeper insight into what I am doing. Since both of us were from the same country, we could feel each others constructions of arguments, disagreements and episodes strongly. I remember him very warmly talking about the story of how we got our way of learning and teaching in Sri Lanka:

Saman: *“Yes, can you tell me where we got our present system of education? Who gave us this? Is it our own way of learning and teaching? I think we got this present system of education as a result of being a British Colony. Of course, most of the colonies got their education and their language. Do we really need their education? Now see what has happened to our system?”*

T: *“Yes, what has happened?”*

Saman: *“You want me to tell you? All right. This is the thing. We got the system from the British and continued using it without reflecting on the applicability of it for centuries. Just blindly following them. Do you say no?”* (interview; Saman, 29.09.04)

Thus, we were always inviting each other to critically engage in arguing and commenting on the story we were constructing. It was never a monologue on the part of the interviewee. Instead, it was an interactive conversation where my self, the researcher, and the interviewee could freely construct meaning within the main focus of the interview situation. Apart from being a moment of critically reflecting on the story of being a learner in a British university, the

interview situation had been a moment of learning for both of us.

Toward the end of our conversation Saman mentioned:

“I never thought that we have so much to say about the experience of learning in a Western university! I could look at areas which I have never thought of before” I was learning a lot about me as a learner here” (interview; Saman, 29.09.04).

Having spoken to my first respondent and having transcribed that particular interview situation I felt that we were having a friendly conversation with a purpose, over a cup of tea. And the assembling of knowledge has been a two way process. I was often contributing to knowledge construction process rather than silently waiting for the respondents to produce information. This was characteristic of all the other interview conversations. The following extract taken from the interview conversation with Jordan, the school teacher from Nigeria highlight the kind of interaction I had with my respondents.

Jordan: *"...we get very good productive comments and suggestions. Even back home the teachers do not give enough comments. So, we do not know what to do...What was your experience when you were doing your MA here?"*

T: *"My experience... One thing is we do not actually like when the teachers write too many comments on our assignments. I was happy if they did not write anything on my writing."*

Jordan: *"That is very strange."*

T: *"May be. I can remember, when I was doing my MA, some of the Sri Lankan students complained the course leader about a particular lecturer who has written lot of comments on assignments. Yes, most of the students were upset about it"* (interview; Jordan, 16.02.05).

Likewise, all the interview situations were moments of constructing and co-constructing knowledge and my role as the interviewer was very different from that of an interviewer who is getting information from the interviewees by asking a series of preplanned 'right type of questions'. While doing my active interviews, I have

been asking, telling, encouraging and using silent probing thus, helping myself and my respondents to secure the best possible stories to address my main quest in the study. What is significant was that my role as the researcher was shaped and reshaped according to the particular interview encounter as well as the kind of stories my respondents were narrating. Of course, this process demanded lot of craftsmanship. I felt that active interviewing is very different from the so called standard interviewing where, the role of the participants' are limited to either the listener or the interviewer. One of the most challenging aspects in my interviewing process was that I had to achieve the main purpose of conducting interviews, while maintaining a friendly and an informal interaction with the respondents. Reciprocal exchange and construction of knowledge between the interviewees and the interviewer thus, contributed to co construction of meaning, while enhancing the active nature of the interview encounters.

Apart from what I have mentioned above, my reflections on the interview encounters highlight other significant aspects worth noting. These aspects are discussed below.

I begin with a particular, important recollection. Active interviewing as a method of collecting data was suspected by most of my friends as well as some teachers. Some said active interviewing is difficult to conduct and it would be difficult for the interviewees to understand what is expected of them. Some pointed out that it would create problems in relation to validity and reliability of the theories I generate in doing this inquiry. However, after the very first interview encounter I found that such critiques on active interviewing were given by those, who have never experienced an encounter of active interviewing. I experienced no significant problem in making the respondents understand their role in my interview process. The capacity of active interviewing to address the main quest in this inquiry was convinced by the response and the comments I gained from the respondents. None of my respondents seemed to engage in the interview process in a formal, artificial, manner. Instead, their contribution in assembling knowledge convinced me that they were happily engaging in an authentic way of sharing experiences. For instance, all the interview encounters continued more than one hour or one and half hour without any comment about time from the respondents.

I understood that the respondents have felt their experience and stories being honored by asking them to narrate their stories, and they thanked me for giving them the chance to talk about their stories. There were instances where the respondents started the conversation thanking me. On some other occasions they thanked me at the end of the conversation. When I met one of the respondents weeks after the interview encounter, she was talking about the experience of interviewing as follows.

Rani: *“Thank you very much for giving me the chance to reflect on the whole experience of being a learner in this institute. You know, it was like writing my learning log for the whole experience. I learnt a lot about what I have been undergoing here”* (Rani, after the Interview).

Some other respondents mentioned that the act of narrating the experience of learning provided them with the chance of comparing and contrasting their current and previous experiences of being learners in higher education.

Moreover, it very rare if a respondent did not talk about the method of active interviewing after the interview encounter. For instance, Yasin, the music teacher from Taiwan, commented on the method of interviewing just after the interview encounter.

Yasin: *“You know Thushari, I am thinking about our conversation now. Believe me, this is a new experience for me. Never thought that an interview can go on like this! It is very interesting to know that there is this kind of ways to conduct interviews. Thank you. Thank you very much for giving me the chance to experience this way of interviewing and I enjoyed talking to you”* (after the interview; Yasin, 21.02.05).

There were other occasions when some respondents were interested in employing active interviewing in their research processes.

Pamela: *“I really wanted to tell you that this is the first time I ever experienced an interviewer participating in this manner, directly contributing to the discussion and telling about her experience as if*

we are in a friendly talk. ... I am thinking now whether I can make use of this technique in my interviews since I am doing qualitative interviewing. I should thank you for giving me this experience” (after the Interview; Pamela, 25.6.05).

Such reflections about the experience of interviewing confirmed me that the interview encounters were learning experiences, both for me, as the researcher, and my respondents. Thus, I find that our interview encounters were always much more than a boring process of collecting decontextualised bits and pieces of information to write a thesis for PhD. Instead, I noticed that new meanings emerged in the process of talking with different respondents from different cultures. The interview context and our social and cultural locations always wavering around, framed our discourse, as well as the meanings we constructed. For instance, the Asian respondents often tried to locate them and myself in similar learning practices, beliefs and assumptions. When they narrated their stories, they often assumed that their stories are mine. For instance, they would refer to “our culture” and “we” while talking about their way of going about learning. This kind of warmth between me and the respondents contributed to honesty as well as genuine construction

of knowledge. This of course does not mean that interviews were faithfully unfolding only with the Asian respondents. Each and every interview context was shaping our meanings in a very genuine manner. We had nothing to hide or exaggerate about our experience. Nevertheless, my role as the interviewer was very challenging, as well as constructive, since the interview conversations were not guided by a preplanned set of questions. I had to be listening, talking, answering their questions, analyzing, and summarizing at the same time, while keeping the conversation within the main focus of doing interviewing.

The discussion in this chapter portrays the process of conducting active interviews as the method of assembling knowledge in writing this thesis. This explains how I invited the respondents to participate in my interview encounters, and how I co-authored the kind of knowledge constructed with my respondents. It further describes my reflections on the process of active interviewing, as the method of constructing the kind of knowledge that is in focus in this thesis.

Having these discussed, I move on to explain about some important aspects in relation to the process of making sense of my data, which will be the main focus in the next chapter.

5.3: Cyclical Sense Making

When did I ‘start’ analyzing data? When did I ‘stop’ analysis and started ‘writing up’? I suggest that you find the answers to these questions in the discussion which follows.

Most of the literature on methodology of doing educational research highlight that there are certain stages of conducting various aspects of a research. However, my research process does not represent such stages in a linear process which make the process of doing research mechanical. Instead of slicing my inquiry into several rigid and specific stages I experienced the process of living the whole inquiry as a process, which is very complex and subtle. Therefore, even though I begin to talk about this meaning making process toward the end of this thesis, in a separate chapter, it never was a separate stage in a linear process. Instead, making sense of

my data occurred in a cyclical process. The technique I adopted for sense making of the stories was based on constructivist grounded theory and it made me live and relive with my data through out the process of making sense of my data as well as writing and reflecting on them.

It is significant to talk about how I used coding as the analytic strategy in this inquiry. As Miles and Huberman (1994) argue, coding is a process that enables the researcher to identify meaningful data and set the stage for interpreting and drawing conclusions. Coding in my process of analysis did not exactly follow the procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1994). I viewed coding as a process, which is more complex than giving categories to data. I found it is also about conceptualizing data, raising questions about data, and discovering data and therefore, I avoided mechanical practices such as preparing code lists before starting actual coding process. Instead, I began with the data in a more inductive manner, underlining the key ideas the interviewees themselves have narrated, in relation to their experience of learning in an intercultural context. While the categories emerged, I compared them with the categories that had already emerged. I feel

that my way of going about analyzing data is ongoing and overlapping, each progression in the research process reshaping and reconstructing the next. I analyzed my data which were constructed, while reading and writing in the process of doing this thesis, reflecting, conducting interviews, transcribing, rereading and rewriting, while going back to literature to compare and contrast my research experience. I remember how I had been analyzing stories while conversing with the respondents. And after each interview, I made it a point to transcribe it before conducting the next interview. I went on rereading the transcriptions, trying to make sense of it before having a two or three hour sleep for the day. I never left heaps of mini discs to be piled up somewhere in the room to be transcribed or files of transcriptions to be analyzed at a later stage. Hence, constructing data, transcribing, rereading the transcriptions and making sense of data and going back to the field occurred simultaneously.

Another issue worth mentioning is that I started analysis with the very first interview. I still feel how excited I was to analyze my first interview transcription. Of course, one may argue that analyzing just one interview does not make any sense. However, it does. My

choice of starting the process of making sense of stories from the very early stages gave me an in depth understanding about the intricacies of conducting active interviewing. The analysis of the first interview helped me rethink certain significant issues such as positioning myself as the researcher-friend in conversation, who has to contribute to the talk, listen, make sense while encouraging the other to narrate stories, while maintaining the main focus of the interview conversation.

At the same time, constant comparison of the themes emerged, enriched the cyclical process of sense making of data. Comparison of emerging themes with the themes that I have identified already provided me with richer insights into the whole process of collecting and analyzing data. For instance, this practice helped me understand the significant aspects worth considering during interview conversations.

The above discussed significant aspects in relation to the process of making sense of data highlights that such an agenda does not isolate particular stages in an inquiry as 'data collection' or 'data

analysis'. Someone who is only familiar with the linear process of collecting and then analyzing data would say that my way of analyzing data is messy. My experience on the contrary is that this ongoing process added complexity to the process of analysis, providing me with new insights about the new meanings that emerged. I therefore, call this process a complex cycle of making sense of constructed stories. Within such an agenda how can I exactly tell you when did I start and when did I finish my data analysis?

Another aspect worth bringing in to notice is that I chose not to use any computer programme to analyze my data. There were two reasons for not using computer programmes for analysis. First, I felt that the stories I am constructing with the respondents, can not be made sense in their flesh and blood through electronic means. Second, I do not believe that computer analysis would help me feel my data authentically, or help me look at my data in a reflexive manner. I was living and reliving with my data, restorying them, feeling the stories so that I can be faithful to my inquiry I am engaged in for years. I struggled with the data, day and night, using coloured pencils, writing comments all over the transcriptions, and

getting headaches and these headaches very often provided me with significant insights into what I am doing. This process helped me feel the constructing activity I am engaged in. Hence, I preferred not to use any electronic source to analyze my data.

Having these significant issues discussed, the section bellow will describe the meanings that emerged in the process of restorying.

Chapter 6: Cultural Scripts

(1) Activities for Learning

In this chapter I discuss the significant themes that emerged through the sense making process of the data constructed in doing this inquiry. These themes convinced that there are different cultural scripts, as well as similar cultural scripts, in terms of being learners in different cultures. I identified three major areas where themes emerged. These areas are activities for learning, role relations for learning and interaction for learning. The major themes emerged portray that there are different as well as similar cultural scripts for learning in relation to different activities for learning, different and similar cultural scripts for role relations between the teachers and students for learning and different as well as similar cultural scripts for interaction for learning among peer learners in Higher Education. This chapter first discusses the themes that emerged in relation to the area of different activities for learning. Second, it moves on to portray the emergent themes in the area of role relations for learning. The themes emergent in the area of interaction for learning among peer learners will be discussed finally.

At the outset of the discussion, I need to mention some significant issues about emergent themes. I have mentioned that there are three emergent themes in relation to cultural scripts for learning. However, my attempt to group data according to emerging themes, considering their main characteristics, does not mean that I could very clearly compartmentalize the meanings of the stories. Instead, all the time the themes kept on overlapping, fusing with the meanings of other themes, making it difficult for me to look at them as separate segments of knowledge. I felt that this is a natural process when we are engaged in analyzing stories told about human experience in terms of themes rather than using categories.

At the same time, in this discussion, I use the names of the countries the respondents come from, in the process of narrating the themes that emerged in doing this thesis. However, references to country names is only a device used to introduce particular respondents to the reader in terms of where he or she is coming from. This does not suggest that this thesis make sense of the notion of culture in terms of different countries. Instead, as has been described in chapter two, the notion of culture in this thesis refers to the collection of stories people tell about themselves, about living,

and their meanings. Furthermore, I am using pseudonyms, instead of the real names of the respondents through out the process of writing this thesis.

Having mentioned the above aspects, I begin to narrate the theme of activities for learning. What emerged as activities for learning, while analyzing data, include talking for learning in higher education, writing for learning, reading for learning and thinking in learning in higher education. Here, I argue that there are different as well as similar cultural scripts for each of these activities for learning. I start with cultural script for talking for learning in higher education.

6.1: Cultural Scripts for Talking for Learning

Taking for learning was one of the most commonly articulated activities by the respondents during interview conversations. Accordingly, it is evident that there are different as well as similar cultural scripts for talking for learning, when it comes to intercultural contexts of higher education. These similar and

different scripts for talking for learning will be discussed in some depth in the following sections.

6.1.1: Topsy-Turvy: Teacher Listening, Students Talking!

Some of the respondents were talking about their surprise about the new experience of participating in lessons in a university classroom, where the teacher is listening, while the students are talking. According to their experience and knowledge, this should be the other way around; the teacher should talk while the students listen. And they told me that it was very difficult for them to understand and participate in this way of going about learning at the outset.

Raju, the MA student, who comes from Malaysia and works in the Ministry of Education in Malaysia, told me that he was astonished to see the way the students participate and contributed in discussions in his MA classroom.

Raju: *“Believe me, the first day I was shocked to find how the classroom works here. My God, I was waiting, waiting and waiting. Where is the lecture? What is the lecturer doing? What is this? Why are the students shouting this much? Why the teacher is listening to students while it should be the other way? All sorts of questions. You see. Actually I was thinking how can I learn for a MA degree in this manner”* (interview; Raju, 03.03.05).

Raju’s surprise regarding the script for talking for learning in this British university suggests that this particular script is missing in his culture of learning in higher education. The most interesting aspect was the way he makes sense of the student participation, during lessons in this British university. In his terms, Students’ contributions during the lessons, means ‘shouting’. This implies that Raju is trying to make meaning of alternative ways of going about talking for learning, in terms of his cultural script for talking for learning. He seems to assume that the student and the teacher in the university classroom have been assigned the roles of the silent listener and the active speaker respectively.

Raju's views imply that his script for talking for learning inside the university classroom is different from the script he encounters in a classroom in Britain. And, the difference between the two scripts is highlighted when he doubts whether this kind of learning would help him gain a MA degree. This also shows his inability to understand this new script for talking for learning.

There were many other stories, similar to that of Raju. For instance, Pat, the university teacher from South Africa was describing her experience in her PhD training programmes in the Institute of Education.

Referring to one particular experience in a class room discussion Pat was talking in an angry tone.

Pat: *"... Thompson should have disciplined that boy. But he didn't.... He should have done it at that moment, as the teacher taking the class. We have to discipline the students...In post graduate level we do not have this type of behaviour. In our classes, well... we can not stop the students talking. But they should not*

disturb the others who are there to listen to me. I tell them 'if you do not want to listen to me, you are free to leave the class since there are students who want to listen to me'... I am the teacher" (interview; Pat, 18.10.04).

Here, Pat was describing her views in relation to student participation she encounters during lessons in the Institute of Education. In her view, talking during lessons is a problem of behaviour. She feels that the teacher should have 'disciplined' the 'boy' who was trying to argue with her. Her choice of words such as 'boy', 'disciplined' and 'should' are symbolic of her role expectations of the teacher and the student. These role expectations seem to shape the meaning of talking for learning. In her view, being disciplined in the class refers to being silent. According to her cultural script, the students who do not listen should leave the classroom. This implies that learning in their culture is synonymous to listening. Thus, Pat suggests that their cultural script for talking is different from the script she encounters in the Institute of Education.

Pat's views on learner behaviour reminded me of what Ho (1996:161, in Ho, 2001) establishes about the behaviour of non-Western learners in relation to the act of learning:

"...the overriding emphasis is on the development of the moral character through education ...to see that ...conduct meets the external criteria. Unlike in individualistic Western cultures... proper behaviour in the ... culture is defined by the social role"

Similarly, Pat tries to alternate the act of talking for learning with their moral code of conduct related to the role of the learner.

Interestingly, Freeda, the primary teacher from Cyprus, doing her MA, told a contrasting story about her experience of learning in the Institute of Education.

Freeda: *"... She is very passive and we are very passive too. There, the approach the teacher uses is like what the Cyprus teachers use.*

We are passive, listening and taking down the notes, everyday. She just reads from the books, and we write. I get really board there”
(Interview; Freeda, 15. 02. 05).

According to Freeda, this particular course has provided her with an experience, which is similar to her learning experience in her own culture.

This reveals another significant facet of cultural scripts for talking for learning. While different schools in a particular institution share a common script for talking, there can be instances when idiosyncratic scripts of teachers contribute to different scripts for talking for learning, within the same institution. Significantly, this particular personal script described by Freeda, seems to share similarities with the cultural script for learning in another part of the world. For instance, Freeda’s experience of learning in a particular classroom in this British university is similar to her experience of learning in her own culture, in terms of talking for learning.

Her view is somewhat similar to what Le Tendre et al. (2001) has found in their study about the working conditions and beliefs of teachers in Japan, the U.S., and Germany. They argue that apart from global patterns and cultural patterns of teaching, there are some individual ways of doing teaching within cultures. Even though this study is not focused on cultural scripts, it highlights that there can be differences within the same culture in the way people do teaching and learning.

Yasin, the music teacher from Taiwan was addressing her way of going about talking for learning:

Yasin: *“The biggest difference... is the way the training programmes are conducted here. Lot of group work and I am new to this type of talking inside the classroom, while the lesson is going on. I got scared... Yes, that was scary. We have ten weeks lectures back home. Everyday, packed lectures. We only do note taking. If we miss the note, we may miss a whole question for the examination. We can ask questions but...don’t disrupt like these students in the middle of the lesson. We meet the teacher after the*

lesson and talk about the questions...In class we do not talk. You have to wait until you are asked to talk. You need to be silent. From school we are disciplined to be silent and listen well....”

“... And see, when they shout we can not learn. The teacher can not teach. Even other Asians in the class do not talk too much. It is our cultures... we Asians interact differently in the classroom to the Europeans” (interview; Yasin, 21.02.05).

This quotation highlights two significant aspects, which inform her cultural script for talking for learning. On the one hand, the act of participating in a lesson seems to be dominated by the activity of note taking. On the other hand, talking during the lesson is associated with the notion of discipline as in the case of Pat. According to Yasin, the ‘good learner’ does not interrupt the teacher by talking. Hence, critical arguments are not meant for students.

Talking about note taking during lessons, Yasin further told me that they need not think why and what they are writing down during the

lectures. They are only concerned about reproducing the note at the examination. One may feel that the kind of standards and practices in Taiwan university classrooms suggests a different meaning of learning to that of the meanings emerge in most of the classrooms in the Institute of Education. Coming from such a background, talking and arguing inside the classroom is interpreted as 'shouting'. Similarly to Pat and Raju, Yasin too views that listening to the teacher without vocally and critically contributing to the lesson refers to their discipline. It seems that learning in that particular culture refers to 'behaving' well in the class.

While making sense of Yasin's story, I could not help going back to my experience of doing my first and post graduate degrees back in Sri Lanka. After every university degree I got a heap of notes, which I had been quietly and obediently written down during lectures. I could still feel the vacuous feeling I experienced thinking what to do with all those notes, once the final examination was over. Now I understand that there are students in other corners of the world, who face the same predicament as learners in higher education.

How John, the Teacher Educator-TESOL, from Kenya was describing his experience of being in the classroom in the Institute of Education, was not very different from those of the others' I have discussed above.

John: "...*Why can't they let us listen to the teacher? I was waiting for the lecture to begin, with my book open to take down the notes. Whaaa...t? No lecture. It is all talking, discussing, arguing with each other. You know, it is going mad...listening to all these. All the students will talk all the time. I think all the students from EU will stop the teacher at any point and talk*" (interview; John, 15.02, 05).

John's way of talking for learning seems to be very different from what he experiences in the classrooms in the Institute of Education. Like the majority of the respondents, John's experience of participating in a lesson is limited to taking down notes delivered by the teacher. Therefore, in his terms, the students who comment and argue during the lesson are disturbing his process of learning or note taking. Comparing his own script for talking for learning with the new experience he encounters in the Institute of Education, he

tends to categorize non-EU and EU students. According to John, the EU students are always critically contributing to the lesson. I find that John, as well as Yasin are grouping students geographically, when they refer to Asian and EU students, considering their behaviour in different activities for learning.

However, I heard different stories about learning which does not harmonize with the cultural categorizations of Yasin and John. On some occasions, respondents from European countries talked about talking for learning, in a similar way to that of Yasin, John, Raju and Pat. Anita, from Italy, has completed her MA in the Institute of Education. By the time we were having our interview, she was doing her PhD.

Anita described her experience of talking for learning in this institute in the following manner.

Anita: *“My God, I was scared... of everything. Everything was strange. I hate group discussions. Even now.... I hate them... When*

the tutor says 'let's discuss', I want to say 'no'. You know what; I am not used to this silly way of shouting in the class...In Italy the lessons are very dense in content. Not like this. There, the lessons are two hour intense lessons and at the end you have fifteen minutes to question. We sit down and listen for two hours without disrupting the lesson.... We never interrupt the teacher. These students can never do that. A...h my God. They are always noisy. So, where is the time for the lesson? I miss the lesson all the time. Nothing learned at the end of the class" (interview; Anita; 29.09.04).

Anita's cultural script for talking for learning invites those who emphasize Western-Asian differences in learning rethink their argument about the passive quality of Asian learners in comparison to the active and critical Western learner. According to Littlewood, (2000:32):

"Statements about Asian students' obedient and unquestioning behaviour are made so frequently that we can scarcely deny that they are based on some form of reality"

Here, the significant aspect is that Littlewood understands the overgeneralization of a particular issue. Describing the responses obtained from a study conducted with learners studying in senior secondary and tertiary level in eight Asian countries (China and Japan, Brunei, Hong-Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam), Littlewood claims that the stereotype of Asian students as 'obedient listeners' was not proved true by the findings. I cited this particular claim to emphasize that even though obedient learners are common in certain Western cultures, studies, either do not highlight this factor, or it has not been studied.

In Anita's point of view, the British university classroom is a noisy place which disrupts the learning process of other silent students. Her construction of the role of university student is based on the act of silent listening. It seems that they have no script for talking for learning in higher education.


Anita's strong rejection of the new script for talking for learning is noticeable. This implies that some learners are reluctant to accept a novel cultural script they encounter in an intercultural context of

learning. Similarly to Anita, Raju and Yasin were not willing to accept talking for learning as something significant. This particular situation highlights that students' scripts for learning would not necessarily change merely because the context for learning has changed.

Some other respondents highlighted that their script for talking is shaped through their assumptions regarding cultural ways of going about talking in relation to roles and status, as well as the role expectations of teacher-student.

6.1.2: Arguing with the Guru?

Here, I narrate cultural scripts for talking which are different in nature to which I was discussing in the previous section. For instance, Lee, from Hong Kong, who is doing his MA, told me significant stories about the script for talking which are intertwined with teacher status in Hong-Kong.



Lee: "... *The teachers encourage us to talk and give our opinions and we can work at our pace.... You can ask questions and argue with the teacher... But, back home, the students are passive. Most of the time, we wait for the information to come from the teacher. Here it is the job of the learner. There, we think, I am here. So teach me. I am listening. We always wait to be fed by the teacher... we are good listeners. We have trained as slaves to be obedient.*"

"... In my culture we are trained to listen to adults and parents. No questions. This transfers into school and then to the university. Arguing with the teacher is not a good thing. Never do that. He knows everything. But, look, here the teachers are not treating you like a thief. They will listen to you and you are relaxed" (interview; Lee, 11.01.05).

According to Lee's view, the present experience of learning is contrasting to his experience of being a learner in Hong Kong. There seem to be two reasons which contribute to this difference. First, the learners in his culture consider the teachers as the experts. Therefore, the teacher knows everything, and their expertise is not

questioned by the learners. Second, the teachers are treated with obedience, like other adults in the society, and therefore, they should be respected. Such moral and ethical issues in relation to teacher status influence the script for talking during the lessons.

For instance, the ‘slavery’ inside the classroom implies that the learner is powerless in front of their intellectual and moral masters, the teachers. Hence, the learners are not supposed to question or speak out in front of the teacher. Thus, in his views, the distance between the teacher and the student, which is moral and authoritative, hinders the student speaking out in front of the teacher.

Rani, the Mauritius teacher, who is doing her PhD, was also telling me that their way of talking for learning, is informed by the moral aspects of the relationship between the teacher and the student.

Rani: “... *It was difficult to understand what to do in a discussion...and this argument thing. I can not do it. You know, we*

never argue when the teacher says something. Nobody would like it, if we do so, since we are not supposed to disagree and argue with the teacher. We have to respect them. They are our Gurus. The other thing is I see no point in arguing at length. Why not learn silently without shouting in the class? Just wasting time” (interview; Rani, 12.03.05).

This quotation reminded me of what Hofstede mentions about a particular type of a student-teacher relationship:

“In the large power distance situation, the parent- child inequality is perpetuated by a teacher-student inequality which caters to the need for dependence ...Teachers are treated with respect...teacher initiating all communication...teachers are never publicly criticized... The teacher is a ‘Guru” (Hofstede, 1994:34).

Of course here, Hofstede is not talking about cultural scripts for learning. According to Hofstede, this kind of teacher-student relationship is a characteristic of a large power distance societies.

However, at this point I am not emphasizing the kind of general culture where Rani comes from. I am interested in the fact that there are replications of the cultural script for learning, which is described by Rani.

According to Rani, arguing with the teacher, the ‘Guru’, is not welcome in their culture. The teacher should be respected. Hence, the task of the learner is to listen while the teacher is talking. Rani did not interpret their way of not arguing with the teacher in terms of power relations. Instead, she describes the distant relationship between teacher and student in terms of respect and other moral norms that are significant in their culture. Owing to this respect, talking for learning is not practiced very much in their university classrooms.

Moreover, in her terms, student contributions during the lessons is time wasting. She seems to accept that the role of the learner is to listen. This depicts that her cultural script for talking is similar to the cultural scripts for talking described by Yasin, Pat, Anita and Lee.

Saman, from Sri Lanka, was explaining how the notion of respect influences the cultural script for talking for learning in a different manner in their culture.

Saman: *“...I am the teacher... and I expect respect from my students as we respect our teachers...If the students openly disagree with you in a more critical manner you would not like it. You would feel that you are being degraded...”* (Interview; Saman, 29.09.04).

This quotation depicts that accepting the learner's point of view during lessons is more related to cultural norms and ethics rather than to the practice of active engagement for learning. Critical arguments of the learner, in his culture are considered as a kind of insult to the status of the teacher. This implies that teaching-learning situations can not ignore the norms and traditions, which are intertwined with human relationships in the society. Therefore, classrooms act and function as microcosms of the macro culture of doing life as well as learning and teaching. What is significant here is that such cultural ways of making sense of life influence the cultural script for talking for learning in this particular culture.

Having explained these issues, I now turn to discuss some other significant aspects in relation to cultural scripts for talking.

6.1.3: We are Only Self Critical

Sheng-Yu, the university teacher from China was telling me a different story about the way of going about talking in their culture.

Sheng-Yu: *“Group discussions are not common in our universities even now... We are not for this arguing, questioning, and critically reviewing others’ points of view in the class. That is out of our culture I think. In China we have self criticism. Even while writing, we do not do criticism like they do it here. We do not like to criticize others and I think that this habit has influenced the way we go about learning. The majority of the students do not think that talking inside the class and arguing with each other is necessary. Sometimes they think that it is showing off... You see, we are kind of isolated as learners. We never even discuss our learning problems with the friends. ...Neither do we speak out much in the class.”*

T: *“You do not speak much in the class? Do you think it has something to do with the language problem”?*

Sheng-Yu: *“Language? You mean English? Yaa.. We have problems with English. But, no.No. It is not the matter in this case. Even if the course is in Chinese we would be quiet. It is the way we do”* (interview; Sheng-Yu, 04.04.05).

According to Sheng-Yu, their cultural script for talking for learning has been influenced by two significant issues. First, the Chinese are isolated learners and they prefer to consider learning as a personal matter, where the individual has to engage in competition to gain qualifications. Therefore, exchanging views during lessons seems to be insignificant. Second, they hold that they are only self critical as a particular culture. This practice of being only self-critical has influenced their way of participating in lessons. Therefore, they would not like to engage in critical arguments during learning situations.

Thus, while some respondents view talking for learning as lack of discipline, shouting or going against the set code of conduct regarding the teacher-student relationship, the Chinese respondent interprets the acts of arguing and raising their point of view as criticizing, which is not welcome in Chinese culture. In Sheng-Yu's terms, being critical has a negative connotation. Therefore, they do not argue or speak out in the classroom.

The Japanese respondent Akihiro, who is doing his MA in TESOL in the Institute of Education, shared a similar view to that of Sheng-Yu, in relation to talking for learning.

Akihiro: "Yaa.... Here I have to be critical and analytical for every single thing. Even while talking these English people are arguing critically. They talk as if they are writing an assignment. We never, ever do that in Japan. But in this university it is all being critical.... A...h. That is the difficult bit. Be critical. Be critical. I am not used to this. Even my Chinese friends find it difficult. ... I told you that we do not like talking too much during the lesson. The others, the teachers here, think we do not know anything. You talk; they think

you know everything..... We do not talk. That is how we are. The Japanese, Chinese... yes, we are self critical and we do not go on criticizing like they do it. We do not criticize others openly. We do not like confrontation with others” (interview; Akihiro 02. 01.05).

What is of important here is that like the Chinese respondent, he draws relations between being self critical and the way of going about talking for learning. He described that Japanese do not confront others and do not criticize others openly. And this seems to transfer into situations of learning. It seems that both Sheng-Yu and Akihiro do not make sense of ‘being critical’ for learning in a constructive manner. And Akihiro’s views about talking suggest that Akihiro and Sheng-Yu share a similar cultural script for talking for learning.

Furthermore, similar findings in relation to Japanese and Chinese learners have been identified by Biggs (1996).

Another issue worth considering is that Akihiro rejects the kind of labeling they are given by the teachers in the Institute of Education in terms of their cultural script for talking for learning. In his terms, their quietness during lessons is being misinterpreted by some teachers in this British university. He mentions that in this overseas university, talking refers to knowing and he disagrees with that view of talking. I felt that he is proudly accepting being quiet in the classroom as a positive cultural practice. Moreover, challenging the view that Japanese and Chinese are passive as learners, Akihiro seems to question the correlation between being vocally quiet, and being passive as learners. In his view, one can be active in mind while being vocally passive.

Reflecting on the views of Akihiro and Sheng-Yu, I found that there are similarities as well as differences in relation to cultural scripts for talking for learning across cultures.

Next, I discuss another different aspect of the nature of cultural scripts for talking for learning.

6.1.4: Absolutes and Alternatives: Where is the Answer?

Jordan: *“Back home things are always black and white. This is the absolute right and this is the absolute wrong. So, we don’t argue or question the teacher’s knowledge. What’s the point? Teacher gives the answer at the end, and we are safe. We are not very much bothered to look for alternatives to what the teacher says”* (interview; Jordan, 16.02.05).

Jordan, the international school primary teacher from Nigeria suggests that in their culture, talking for learning is influenced by their assumptions regarding the truth as well as the role of the teacher. According to him, their teaching-learning situations are about absolute truths. And the teachers reveal this ultimate truth to students. Such an atmosphere does not promote arguments to talk about alternatives. This further implies that the meaning of a lesson at post graduate level has different versions in different cultures. According to Jordan, lessons refer to situations where the teachers transfer ‘correct’ information to the learners for the purpose of reproducing the correct answers at the examinations. Therefore, the

idea of knowledge construction during teaching-learning situations seems unimportant in their culture.

There were some others, whose views about talking for learning resonate with the above ideas. Aameena, the Maldivian Head teacher commented on her way of going about talking for learning in the following manner.

Aameena: “.... *I am not used to talking during the lesson. Not trained to that. I was well spoon fed by all my teachers back home. I have the practice of doing what the teacher wants me to do. But now... It is the opposite. Now I have to talk and learn which is very difficult for me to do. Alternatives are there for everything. The students argue and give their ideas about all what the teacher says... When I am in conversation with my supervisor, I still ask ‘what is the correct answer for this?’ ... So, I am not for arguing for alternatives even after studying four years in this Institute*” (Interview; Aameena, 03.10.04).

Ameena's description for not speaking out during lessons seems quite similar to that of Jordan. In her view, the important aspect of her culture of learning is that students' learning seems to be the responsibility of the teachers. The implication is that active engagement in the process of learning is not the task of the learner. Therefore, critical reviewing of the knowledge transmitted by the teacher is not a common practice in her culture of learning.

What is significant is that Ameena has come to the Institute of Education to do a diploma course, years before, and then she has done her MA degree. By the time we had our interview conversation, she was a fourth year PhD student in the Institute of Education. Notwithstanding the fact that Ameena has been a student in this institution for a considerable period of time, she still finds it difficult to adjust to the cultural script for talking for learning as it is practiced in this university. According to her, the presence of alternatives in the process of learning is a novel idea to her. This epitomizes the difficulty of getting adjusted to new cultural scripts for learning once the students have got used to their own ways of going about learning. In the cases of Ameena and Jordan, their

script for talking for learning has been alternated by the act of waiting for the teacher to come out with the ‘right’ answer.

The discussion above suggests that the cultural script for talking for learning is different in different cultures, while there are some similarities across cultures in terms of the cultural script for talking for the purpose of learning.

Next, I begin to explain the emergent cultural scripts in relation to writing for learning.

6. 2: Cultural Scripts for Writing for Learning

This section argues that there are different as well as similar cultural scripts for writing for learning, in different cultures. These cultural scripts will be described, focusing on different aspects, which contribute to varying and similar cultural scripts for writing across cultures.

6.2.1: Beating Around the Bush

The majority of the respondents' experiences in writing for learning in higher education seem to differ from the experience they gain in the Institute of Education. For instance, Seema, the university teacher from Brazil talked about her experience of writing in this British university as follows.

Seema: *"...here, the way of writing in the academic world is very different. Naaa..... ow, when we want to say certain things, ... we go round and round and raa...ound before coming to the exact point. So, we come to the most important part of the discussion only toward the end. But here, they do the opposite. You know, we never say things directly and we apply the same method in writing as well"*

"... Here, their writing is very different. Their writing is much focused. And direct. Their way of writing for academic purposes is not creative as well. I think it is a cultural aspect. These people are very direct, you see. That is the way they behave. ... the language they use is symbolic of ... the way they are. They never beat around when they talk. But we always do. So, we form our

written language also in that manner” (Interview; Seema, 30.09.04).

As Seema describes, their way of writing for academic purposes is different from the way the Institute of Education promotes writing. The main difference seems to be the way they structure their writing. Once started, they seem to go on writing ‘creatively’ without giving prominence to the main focus of the particular writing task. Contrary to that practice, in this Institute, she has to write directly to the point. She uses the word ‘focused’ to describe writing in this institute and ‘creative’ for their way of writing. What is important is the way she makes sense of these two ways of writing. It seems that in Seema’s culture, creative writing is not very much focused on a particular issue. This highlights that different cultures make sense of the purpose of writing for academic purposes in varying ways. It also suggests that critical engagement in writing is not very common in their culture of learning.

She further speaks about the intertwined nature of English academic writing and English way of behaving. This depicts that when

learners encounter new scripts for learning, in a new cultural context, they tend to interpret these scripts in terms of what they see in relation to other aspects of that particular culture. In this case, Seema tries to draw relations between how the English people behave in their daily life and their way of writing for academic purposes. Such interpretations sometimes can constitute misinterpretations regarding cultural scripts for writing, which are different from one's own script for writing.

Marina, the Mexican university teacher, who believes that their higher education is highly influenced by the French tradition, told me that Mexican university learners and the teachers have the tendency to go around the main focus in writing as well as in talking.

Marina: *"We have the French tradition of teaching and learning in Mexico. We tend to generalize things most of the time...now, I find it difficult to find a relation between my data and my topic. I find that if I need to ground my thesis on earth, it is very difficult for me. When I write, I go on talking about general things without giving*

reasons or evidence... I just go round and round without going to the point concretely. But... learning to write in the way they do it here is difficult since it is very different from how we write”

“...I can...let’s say, start a lesson on Dewey’s system of education. I will go on talking about something else which is of my interest..., before I really start with Dewey. That is how we write as well”
(interview; Marina, 03.09.04).

Marina’s way of writing is quite characteristic of that of Seema. It seems that she lacks focus in writing, talking as well as in thinking. When she directly notes that it is how ‘they’ do it, she suggests that their script for writing is different from the way of going about writing in this British university. According to her, she has not quite got the focus of her research still. Nevertheless, she seemed to luxuriate in the thought that they can write and talk in a round about way. Even though she is aware of the characteristics of academic writing advocated by this Institute, she seemed to be uninterested in engaging in that process seriously. This suggests that learners value their own cultural script for writing whether it is accepted or not in

the host culture of learning. Some, like Marina, do not make a strong effort to adjust to the new cultural script for writing.

It also seems that cultural scripts for writing for learning can comprise different layers, since scripts can be fusions of different cultural ways of going about learning. In this case, it is a combination of Mexican and French.

Next, I highlight that some respondents' cultural scripts for writing have been shaped by their assumptions about writing.

6.2.2: Please Smile Carolina

The main purpose of writing, according to some respondents, is to please their teacher. One major emphasis in their process of learning is to get their writing marked by the teacher.

Gifti, from Jamaica, who is doing her MA, explained her experience of writing in the Institute of Education, comparing it with her former way of going about writing for learning.

Gifti: *"I still do not know what is expected of me. When I do a bit of work and thought that I have done a good piece of writing, it turns out to be hopeless, I mean Carolina is not happy about it. When I thought another piece of writing as hopeless, she gets a smile on her face while reading it. So...?"* (interview: Gifti; 01.10.04).

This quotation implies that Gifti's focus on writing is dependent on her teacher's view about how to write. At the same time, one of her targets of writing seems to aim at satisfying the teacher. For instance, before beginning the interview conversation, she took an assignment from her file, telling me that after one whole year, Carolina, her tutor, had a smile while reading her assignment. And added that for the first time, the tutor has given some ticks for her writing. This raises the question whether she has got any idea of the role played by the purpose in academic writing.

Similar views about writing are shared by Marina, Seema, Jordan, Aameena and Abaz. According to them, writing is meant to be produced for the teacher to be marked, rather than being an individual piece of constructive work. For instance, Marina, from Mexico, seems very conscious about her capacity to please her supervisor through what she writes. And she also seems to be depending on her teachers' comments in the process of her writing. At one point, she mentioned that she is worried, since she feels that she is not producing the best writing that can please her supervisor.

Rani, the respondent from Mauritius seems to have a similar cultural way of going about writing.

Rani: *"At the beginning ... you see, what ever I tried those days my tutor said 'you, please do not write like this.' It is very difficult to write in the way the teachers here want us to write. They are difficult to satisfy"* (interview; Rani, 12.03.05).

Here, Rani's aim of writing is to please her teacher rather than addressing the main purpose of what ever she writes. In a way, her desire to please the teacher seems rather mechanical. That means her emphasis on satisfying teachers through writing seems to be an effort of pleasing the teacher without knowing why and how to produce writing at Post Graduate level.

Cultural scripts for writing as they are described by Gifti, Marina, Rani as well as some others show that there are similar as well as different cultural scripts for writing across cultures and that these scripts are shaped by varying ways of going about the purpose of writing.

Critical writing is another commonly commented aspect of writing. According to many respondents, referencing while writing, reviewing references critically, while meaningfully fusing them in their writing are novel experiences.

6.2.3: Critical reviewing as Personal Attack

I start with Pamela's views about academic writing. Pamela is a Teacher Educator from Finland. She has completed her MA in the Institute of Education in 2004, and at the moment doing her PhD in the institute.

While telling me her story of being a student in this institute, Pamela was highlighting the problems and issues she experienced in relation to academic writing.

Pamela: *"In Finland... you start on something and you go on and on ... then at the end you say what you want to say. Here, it is different. Now, when I started I was new to this practice. The other thing is using reference. Goodness... Reference, reference for every word you write. It is drawing me mad. Back home we quote five six authors and we do not know exactly why we chose them.... I may quote if the writer has said something about what I am writing. But never think critically of the argument of that writer and why it is in my writing"* (interview; Pamela, 25.06.05).

Like many other respondents, Pamela also mentioned about her difficulties in adjusting to the way of writing as it is done in this University. Her major problem is related to being critical while writing. Interestingly, their way of doing referencing seems to have nothing to do with critical engagement in writing. This implies that academic writing does not hold similar meanings in all the cultures. Instead, critical writing seems a missing script in some cultures like Pamela's, whereas it is a prominent cultural script in Western way of writing for academic purposes.

Describing more about their script for academic writing, she told me that she once tried to do an activity done in this institute, back home, with her student teachers. She has given them some modules of former students to comment on the mark they have got, considering the style of writing and the content of the modules. She has thought that the students will enjoy and learn from this new kind of activity. To her surprise, the students have got offended saying that it is unethical to be critical on someone else's writing and the marks given to that particular writing. In her students' terms critical reviewing of others' writing is not ethical. This example

particularly throws light on the way different cultures think about being critical regarding writing for academic purposes.

Another cultural script for writing, which is somewhat similar to that of Pamela, was described by Yasin, the Taiwan teacher.

Yasin: “...*I think, here, the way they do critical writing is mechanical. They often try to find something wrong with the ideas of another writer. But in my culture we always look for the positive things. We compare others’ work to see why this is better than that...We do not criticize negatively. Especially, if you are commenting on one of your teacher’s work, you will be marked if you say negative things about it. You know, unlike here, they think if you criticize their work, you are doing a personal attack*” (interview; Yasin, 21.02.05).

Yasin’s comments about their way of writing portray how culture shapes our scripts in relation to writing. In her view, the kind of critical writing advocated in this university is mechanical, since

critical reviewing refers to criticizing negative aspects of a particular piece of writing. Her construction of the meaning of being critical in writing means to discuss the positive issues of a particular piece of writing in comparison to another work of writing. Criticizing negative aspects of a piece of writing in her culture is considered personal attack.

Yasin further implies that the process of writing in her culture can not ignore issues of power and status. For instance, criticizing the writing of a person, who holds higher social status, does not seem to be accepted in the society. This suggests that writing for academic purposes is enveloped in other cultural issues such as teacher student relationship, power and authority as well as maintaining other human relationships in the society. Significantly, when learners with such complex cultural scripts for writing, encounter an academic culture with different cultural scripts for writing, they interpret the new culture of writing with the meanings available to them in their own culture.

Owing to these differences, critical writing becomes quite challenging to some of the students who come to learn in British universities. Rifca, the teacher from Pakistan, described about their way of writing in higher education.

Rifca: *"I have never experienced referencing while writing as it is done here before. We never do reference like this. You know what we do? May be we just write the names of two or three other authors, who have written on the topic and that is it. We are never bothered about looking at the writer critically, commenting on his ideas or what ever. It is something odd if we do it like that. I still find it difficult to do it. I do not have any practice in critically looking at others' writing.... We all have problems ..., in our part of the world, we are not very much for this critical thing in learning"* (interview; Rifca, 26.01.05).

As Rifca mentions, they do not have the practice of critically evaluating other authors. According to her, writing seems following a particular pattern rather than critically engaging in what they are

writing about. At the same time she tries to generalize this way of writing as it is the norm of writing in 'her part of the world'.

What draws my attention is her attempt to generalize their way of referencing to their 'part of the world'. This in a way seems an attempt to justify their cultural script for learning. Another important aspect is that earlier in her story she was emphasizing that she does not represent their own culture of learning, owing to her elite school education and the exposure to other cultures. Even though she was narrating her story of learning in different layers; being a Pakistani, who is more English, she also shares the scripts of those who come from her 'part of the world'. This implies that even when learners believe that they are in an intercultural process in relation to learning, some scripts for learning has their roots in their own cultures. Rifca's story reminded me of LeVine's (1999) argument that cultural impact on human beings is evident and acknowledged even when the individuals oppose it.

While all the other respondents were describing their difficulties in relation to critical writing, Kengi, the Kenyan university teacher,

doing her PhD in Gender Studies highlights a different aspect of her new experience of writing critically.

Kengi: *“The other thing here is over referencing, an exaggeration. That is definitely too much. Toooo... much. Every statement is being referred to and even when you read something you get disturbed due to so much of referencing. Back home, we express things in a different way. In a better way so that any reader can understand. What ever you write you need to refer it to the writer. Otherwise they call it something. Pagaa...ism? Why should I refer about every single thing? I was very angry about this over referencing... There are ways of better writing without referencing this much”* (interview; Kenji, 07.06.05).

Her way of making sense of critical writing, that is employed in the Institute of Education is different from others. In her view, ‘over referencing’ in this institute is an exaggeration. On the one hand, her argument suggests her lack of understanding about using referencing for academic writing. On the other hand, this implies that she has different views about reader friendly writing. Thus,

according to her, writing which is reader friendly should not disturb the reader with many references.

This quotation depicts that some learners reject new cultural script for writing and they moreover, try to convince others that their cultural scripts for writing is better. It further suggests that the ways of going about writing, and the meaning of being reader friendly in academic writing can be different in different cultures and this difference is been questioned by the learners, who come from other cultures.

Next, I bring in to focus certain cultural scripts for writing, which have been shaped by the meanings given to academic writing in different cultures.

6.2.4: Just Reproducing the Note

According to Some respondents, their meaning of writing for academic purposes does not harmonize with the meaning of writing they are exposed to in the Institute of Education.

Abaz, the Pakistani University teacher told me that critical writing is a big challenge for him, since he has never been used to critical writing as a learner.

Abaz: "...I had no idea of writing on our own as they do it here. We always reproduce what the teacher dictated to us. Writing was never developed this way back home. For essay writing we had some almost fixed set of topics such as national Heroes. ... we memorise an essay written on this from a text. Then, reproduce it as an essay. We were trained to do essays after memorising certain things."

"I think we are not critical when we write. When we write we are descriptive... Not critical. ... we write apologetically. Because we have to be very careful about what we write and how we write

them. We can not critically evaluate others' view like they do it here. That is dangerous in my culture" (interview; Abaz, 30.10.04).

The cultural script for writing described by Abaz has been discussed by Bradley and Bradley (1984) within a different context. As they note many overseas students learning in Western universities have long experiences of getting the right answers by the teacher, in the form of lecture notes. This has prevented the learners from engaging in critical learning even at the university level.

Abaz's views on academic writing seem to be very similar to my experience in relation to writing in my own culture. Especially for our first language and second language, we have essays published by many authors. The learners often memorise them for the purpose of reproducing them at examinations. Owing to this kind of practices in relation to writing, Abaz, the university teacher notes that giving priority to his own voice while writing is still a challenge for him.

The other significant aspect of their writing is that it is apologetic or descriptive. In a very simple manner he illustrates that their way of going about writing is embedded in their general culture; religion and practice of not being critical of others since it can be 'dangerous'.

Similarly to the views of Abaz, Freeda from Cyprus told me that the main purpose of participating in lessons in their universities is to take down the notes delivered by the teachers. According to her, 'repetition is the mother of learning' and therefore, in almost all the subject areas, the learners just repeat what the teachers have given them in the form of a note.

Ameena also believes that one of the reasons for her difficulty in writing critically is the culture of reproducing the teachers' note, to which she has got used to. There were many other respondents who told me that their way of going about academic writing is based on reproducing the note dictated by the teachers.

While majority of the students highlight differences in the way they engage in critical writing, there were rare occasions when someone was telling me that their way of writing critically is equal to the script for writing that is advocated in this host institute.

Stella: “Yes, we have the same thing for writing. Our professors do not like if we write only what they taught us during the lectures. So, when we write we have to give others’ ideas and argue for and against and give our own ideas. So, it is the same there” (interview; Stella, 26.06.05).

Stella, the PhD student from Bulgaria was telling me that critical writing is part of their way of going about writing. Nevertheless, she later described that they are not much exposed to reading owing to lack of library facilities in their culture. This has resulted in taking down notes from the teachers’ lectures, who also do not read much. This implies that in Stella’s culture, reading is not very common among teachers as well as students due to lack of library facilities. Hence, the question is how far they can be critical in their writing and how far they can be reproducing the notes they take down during lectures.

This discussion thus highlights that there are different cultural scripts as well as similar scripts of writing for learning in different cultures. This reminded me of the notion of ‘contrastive rhetoric’ which was initiated by the American linguist Robert Kaplan (Connor, 1996:5). This notion highlights that language and writing are cultural phenomena (Kaplan, 1966, 1983 and 1987). According to Kaplan, each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it. It further describes that the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with writing in the second language. What is relevant here is Kaplan’s view that language is cultural and that the cultural ways of going about first language can influence the way of writing in a second (or foreign) language.

Bringing the argument about cultural scripts for writing to a closure, I start the next chapter, discussing the cultural scripts for reading that emerged through the sense making process of respondents’ narratives.

6.3: Cultural Scripts for Reading for Learning.

This section addresses the major theme of cultural scripts for reading, emphasizing how learners from different cultures make sense of the role played by the “purpose” of reading for academic purposes.

6.3.1: Scanning Means Fabricating

Respondents who come from different cultures articulate varying ways of doing reading for academic purposes. Some mentioned that they find it difficult to reading in chunks, which is promoted in this British university.

Roger, from Ghana told me that they are reading the whole text to get the Gestalt of what they read.

Roger: *“...We need to get the whole story rather than getting chunks. If I read fragments of an article, I get just a bit of the whole picture. That means, you can not really get a clear picture, if you*

do not know what the whole thing is about... You can not ... think meaningfully. Ooo...h I am not satisfied with this bits and pieces reading. If I give my opinion about any writing after reading a bit, I am not giving the truth... not making sense of what the author is really saying. I am fantasizing. I am adding too much for my interpretation ...” (interview; Roger, 25, 10, 04).

Roger’s preference to reading the whole text delineates a story of a different cultural script for reading for learning. Interestingly, his views urged me to think, why do we read? In his terms, getting the whole picture or the whole ‘meaning’ of a text is the goal of any kind of reading. It seems that he does not highlight the notion of reading for a purpose. Meaningful for what purpose is not his question.

The interest Roger shows in searching for ‘truth’ suggests that in his culture, the idea of differing voices in reading is not significant. Reader interpretation according to him refers to distorting the author’s meaning of a particular truth. This suggests that in his culture the multiple voices in reading are not highlighted. Reading

means reading only what the author narrator has narrated in a text. It seems that Roger's cultural script for reading does not encourage him to accept that the meaning of a text lies in the act of reading and that it would be possible for a reader to have an active interpretive notion of reading. Contrary to this active interpretive possibility, Roger's cultural script for reading seems to encourage gaining the meaning of the whole text in author's point of view.

Pamela, from Finland also told me that it is difficult for her to scan through a book, and that she needs to read 'from the beginning to the end'. Finding information by scanning a book, according to her, is not a skill that is promoted in their culture of learning. Their way of reading for learning is characteristic of Roger's way, which pays less attention to the purpose of reading for learning. And she finds it difficult to get adjusted to reading in meaningful chunks as this Institute promotes.

What is noteworthy is that the critical aspect of reading can get lost in the attempt of reading the whole text in author's point of view. Thus, sometimes, the cultural ways about reading, the learners bring into intercultural learning situations can be different from the

cultural scripts that are available in the host culture of reading for academic purposes. This can also lead to difficulties in relation to getting adjusted to the kind of reading that is advocated by these Institutions.

According to some other respondents, the cultural script for reading for academic purposes is based on the act of getting information.

6.3.2: Reading is Getting Information

This discussion highlights that in some cultures, the activity of reading is aimed only at getting information. And the act of reading basically involves reading the sentences written by the writer.

Magi, the MA student from France, talked about their practice of reading in the following manner.

Magi: *“In reading... we do differently. I think our teachers encourage us to read and write what this writer says about this, and this writer about ..., what I think about their writing is not important. They don't care about what I think of the writer. Here, all the time, you have to say 'in my point of view'. That is not what we do in reading. They want us to read for information. That's all. Never asked to think of why these writers write like this, what I can add to this, nothing. So, I am used to read just what is there in the text. No arguments with the text. Now, I am trying to learn it here and it is not easy”* (interview; Magi, 28.06.05).

Magi clearly points out that their way of reading for academic purposes is different from the way of reading she encounters in the Institute of Education. They are used to reading the author's point of view without considering their points of views as readers. This reminds me of the kind of academic reading we are used to in our culture. Our way of reading also is based on reading the author for the purpose of gaining information. In Magi's point of view, the way she has got used to reading in her culture of reading for academic purposes has created problems in surviving certain requirements of the new context of learning. This suggests that

critical engagement with the text is either absent or not important in their learning culture. What they seem to practice is a kind of passive reading of what the author narrates in any piece of writing.

Donald, the PhD student from Uganda illustrated a different reason for their way of reading for information.

Donald: *“In my country there is no culture of reading. There is a scarcity of resources for reading and our people are not much for reading. In the University there is only one book on a particular topic and the teacher takes it to teach all the students. So, we listen and note down what she says about that topic. There is nothing called critical reading for learning. When there are no books how can we read critically or in what ever ways?”* (interview; Donald, 06.06.05).

This quotation portrays a different facet of cultural scripts for reading. In his view, their way of doing reading has been influenced by lack of resources for reading. In such a context, the notes they

get from the teachers become an important source of knowledge. According to Donald, rather than critically reviewing these notes, they use them as the main source of gaining information. Thus, their way of going about reading has been shaped by the kind of access they have for reading materials. This implies how availability of resources, the economic status of a particular country contributes to different cultural scripts for learning, and in this case, for reading.

Rifca, the Pakistani teacher told me that they are not used to critical reading of a text, since they are only supposed to read and get information so that they can write something more at the examination. She mentioned that it does not matter whether the reader agrees or disagrees with the writer's views. Texts, in her point of view, are only meant for reading for facts. This illustrates that in some cultures, the script for reading is located around the purpose of getting information, and reproducing them at the examinations. When the learning process does not require the learner to write critically, there seems to be no need for reading for alternative voices. Rifca's ideas further highlight the intertwined

nature between cultural scripts for reading and cultural scripts for writing.

While some respondents talk about different cultural scripts for reading for learning in higher education, some others from South Africa, Bulgaria, and Austria suggest that their cultural scripts for reading for learning is similar to the cultural script for reading they encountered in the Institute of Education. This delineates the availability of similar cultural scripts for reading for learning across cultures.

While the discussion above explain the cultural scripts for reading for learning, the following section highlight that there are different as well as similar cultural scripts for thinking for learning.

6.4: Cultural Scripts for Thinking for Learning

I begin the discussion with a brief explanation regarding what I mean by thinking for learning. The meaning of ‘thinking for

learning' in this discussion refers to the engagement of the learners, in terms of internal dialogue, with the learning process they are involved in. Of course, this discussion will be intertwined with the themes we have been discussing in the above sections. That means I am talking about thinking for learning in relation to all kinds of activities for learning, interactions for learning as well as the whole process of learning in higher education. Hence, one may find that themes discussed here are overlapping with the themes highlighted in previous sections of this chapter.

6.4.1: The Gospel Truth

It was evident that in some cultures the Post Graduate students engage in different activities for learning without critically thinking about the activity or the task they are engaged in. For instance, some mentioned that they would just go on making notes of the lectures without thinking about why they are writing them down.

Freeda: “... *we always rote learn the teacher's notes... We do not think actually what the teacher is talking about. We just write them*

down. Even when we read them later, we don't think of the note critically as they do it here. We do not need to think since no one is asking whether what she says is correct or wrong. Teacher has the authority. I think we were just doing what we have been doing all these years" (Interview; Freeda: 15.02.05).

Freeda's reflections on the way they go about the act of taking down notes from the lectures dictated by the teachers in Cyprus suggest that they do it more or less as a habit. Their basic activities for learning seem to be taking notes, memorizing them and reproducing them at examinations. Therefore, they have got the habit of doing these activities during any teaching-learning situation without questioning the need to engage in these activities. In her culture, the act of thinking in relation to certain activities for learning seems to have been alternated by particular habits related to learning. At the same time, the role of thinking for learning has been shaped by the meaning they attach to the act of learning as well as their role expectations of the teacher. The teacher is the expert who is supposed to deliver knowledge and his or her knowledge is not contested by the learners. This reminds me of what Abaz, from Pakistan told me about the teacher's notes. He

referred to them as the ‘Gospel truth’ that is never questioned by the learner. It seems that when there is no questioning, the learners accept knowledge as it is given. That means, when the learner’s voice is silent, they are not thinking, or they do not see a need to think about the process of learning.

Freeda’s views brought me reflections on my experience of learning in my own culture. Wasn’t I learning in the same manner, from similar teachers in a different corner of the world? Our way of going about learning did not demand much thinking on the part of the learner. Instead, drilling and memorizing the teachers’ notes help us get through examinations.

Speaking about the process of thinking for learning, Donald, from Uganda told me something very important.

Donald: *“You know, people teach and learn in the way they have been taught. And me too. Throughout, I have been listening to my teachers as a student. Now I feel the critical moment is when the*

students and the teachers engage in talking and sharing their views, arguing for and against.... I am not from such a culture... I have never been thinking what I am listening to” (interview; Donald, 06.06.05).

Donald seems to come from a culture in which the teacher talks while the students listen. His views depict that when the learning process do not demand critical engagement on the part of the learner, they do not get into the habit of thinking for learning. As Donald understands, learning without thinking about the process of learning has been the normal practice in their culture for generations. And significantly, he seems to accept that he also will continue that tradition of learning without thinking about learning. This suggests that practices related to teaching and learning tend to continue for generations. It seems that the meaning and actions in relation to the context of teaching-learning in certain cultures continue without being questioned. Moreover, as Donald mentions these cultural ways of engaging in learning are transmitted by the teachers as well as the students to the future generations. This highlight that cultural scripts for thinking for learning are deep rooted in certain cultures.

Magi, the French student described that they have never been asked to think about the process of their learning. And, John told me that in this British university he started thinking while engaging in discussions. Frieda mentioned that unlike the teachers in the Cyprus University, the teachers here encourage the students to think about the process of learning and hence, she can now reflect and review her process of learning, which is a novel experience for her.

The examples discussed above highlight that some learners' cultural script for thinking is different from what they experience in the Institute of Education in terms of learning.

At the same time, there are occasions, when the respondents articulate novel views about the meaning of thinking for learning.

6.4.2: Vocal Thinking and Critical Thinking

Let us see how Akihiro, from Japan gives meaning to thinking for learning.

Akihiro: “...*We do not like arguing at length for a simple thing. We listen and we think without arguing inside the class. How can we study if we are passive in mind? We have to argue in mind, think of what we learn. The English students may not be thinking deeply as we do. They just talk things off in the classes*” (interview; Akihiro, 02.01.05).

Akihiro addresses the issue of thinking for learning in relation to vocal contributions during lessons, which is very common in classrooms in the Institute of Education. Here, Akihiro is challenging the views of the teachers’ in the host Institution regarding their cultural script for thinking in learning. He assumes that Japanese students’ silence inside the classroom is been interpreted as being passive by the teachers in the Institution. His argument is that talking itself does not guarantee that a learner is

thinking about learning. He told me that they argue silently, in mind. In his view, the English students who argue critically inside the class may not engage in thinking as ‘deeply’ as the ‘quiet’ learners. This particular view provided me with new horizons in terms of restorying the stories about thinking for learning. First, is the process of thinking for learning being given similar meanings in every culture? It seems that Japanese learners, in Akihiro’s point of view are not passive. They are thinking more deeply than who critically argue and show that they are thinking. This amounts to other questions. Who are passive learners in higher education? Are they vocally passive or mentally passive? What is the correlation between speaking out and critical thinking in a context of intercultural learning? My experience in learning tells me that all sorts of talking do not lead to learning or thinking. Instead, talking which contribute to interchanging and examination of ideas among learners help thinking for learning. When learners are only engaged in talking narratives there would not be meaning attribution to their talk. It is the meta-narratives which bring more meaning to the picture. Here, Akihiro may be commenting on lack of meaning attribution in the talk the learners engage in.

There is another aspect to Akihiro's comments on their 'silent thinking'. In my view, the cultural point of making sense of self is significant in understanding the way of going about thinking for learning as he means it. I feel that he was emphasizing talking and referring to thinking since the Japanese views of presenting self in talk is different from Western view. Reflections on my respondents' narrations about contributing to lessons, I felt that cultures differ in terms of making thinking public. I understood that like Sri Lankan learners, the Japanese also do not like making their thinking public. Therefore, could thinking be a silent process for some cultures of learning? If so, can I substitute the phrase 'passive learners' with 'quiet learners' in relation to learners who think silently about the process of learning?

Kengi's views on her experience as a learner in this Institute added to the above questions regarding thinking for learning.

Kengi: "...*That is wonderful. It does not matter what ever you talk. Just talk. They will think you know better than those who do not talk for whatever reason. If you talk a lot, they think you know a lot. I*

wonder whether we are not supposed to think in our lessons... I mean the things these students talk in the classes... Rubbish. I feel that they need to think what is important ... before they speak up. I feel any fool can say the things they say. In my classes back home, the students are welcome to talk, but no nonsense. They have to think what they are doing in the lesson and then contribute” (interview; Kengi, 07. 06. 05).

Comparing her experiences of learning in her own culture, with the experience of learning in this British university, Kengi, from Kenya, differentiates between ‘just talking’ and ‘thinking and talking’. Similarly to the case of Akihiro, Kengi questions what kind of thinking is necessary in talking for higher education? Her views invite us to rethink about what is thinking for learning? What is the role of thinking in relation to activities for learning? Another aspect of her argument is that in this university, talking means knowing and therefore thinking has been alternated by talking. Hence, she thinks that thinking has not given due priority in the activities for learning in this Western university.

Roger, from Ghana, speaking about thinking for writing mentions that the kind of academic writhing, promoted in the Institute of Education, emphasizes the way of writing than what you write.

Roger: “... *It is funny in a way. For every single sentence you need to write linking words. Linking this to that, this to that... ultimately you learn to write linking words rather than logically thinking about what you write*” (interview; Roger, 25. 10.04).

Interestingly, Roger’s way of looking at writing suggests that thinking is not very important in the process of writing here. Rather, the main aspect of writing that is highlighted in this institution is linking ideas while writing. According to him, more than thinking of the content and the argument, the learners have to think about how to link ideas in their writing. The question is that which aspect of writing requires more thinking? What you write or how cohesive you write? How do learners from different cultures view thinking for writing in higher education? Roger’s story suggests that there are different answers to these questions in different cultures, since the cultural script for thinking for learning basically differs across cultures.

In this chapter, I argued that there are different as well as similar cultural scripts for activities for learning; talking for learning, writing for learning, reading for learning as well as thinking for learning in a context of higher education. This argument throws light on two significant characteristics regarding cultural scripts for activities for learning. First, cultural scripts for learning are changing over time and thus they are not static. Second, cultural scripts for different activities for learning are enveloped in different layers such as the institutional scripts, domain specific scripts as well as scripts articulated by learners, who are in an intercultural process. Reflecting on these characteristics, I found that cultural scripts, which comprise meaning, context and action can not in the real sense be static. Moreover, they can not be sealed in different packets of cultural scripts, since the scripts learners speak about have been shaped by various other issues as has been mentioned above. Bringing the discussion on cultural scripts for different activities for learning to a closure, I now move on to chapter 7, which explains the theme of cultural scripts for role relations for learning in higher education.

Chapter 7: Cultural Scripts

(2) Role Relations for Learning

This chapter argues that there are different as well as similar cultural scripts for role relations for learning. Role relations according to this thesis include the teacher student relationships for learning, and the interaction among the students for learning. Hence, this discussion will be two fold; role relations related to teacher-student relationship for learning and role relations related to interaction among students for learning.

I begin with the themes emerged in relation to role relations regarding student-teacher relationship for learning.

7.1: Cultural Scripts for Teacher Student Role Relations:

A Matter of Distance?

Respondents' stories regarding role relations for learning between the teacher and the student were centered on different degrees of distance they maintain in teacher-student role relations. Therefore, I

am going to discuss the significant sub themes that emerged in relation to teacher-student role relations, basing them on the degree of the distance that exists between the teacher and the student. The notion of ‘distance’ I address here will be three fold; power distance, moral distance and close distance. Moral distance relates to the distance maintained by moral and spiritual issues that encapsulate the relationship between the teacher and the student. Power distance is assumed to have created by the academic power and authority of the teacher role. Close distance highlights a distance created again by authority of the teacher. However, close distance is seemingly close, yet distant. I start this discussion with moral distance.

7.1.1: Moral Distance

As has been portrayed by the stories of the respondents, in some cultures, the role relation between teacher and student has been shaped by a kind of spiritual and moral distance, which contributes to a complex, sensitive quality to the teacher-student relationship. I start with the story of Saman, the respondent from Sri Lanka.

Saman: “... *I expect respect from my students as the way we respect our teachers. We still obey the morals and the values and I think respecting teachers is there in our blood... Think now, if we meet one of our teachers, who has got retired what kind of feelings do we get? It is more a spiritual kind of thing I believe. Teacher pupil relation is a very sensitive issue in our culture*” (interview; Saman, 29.09.04).

Saman, reminded me the deep rooted values and traditions embedded in the notion of teacher in Sri Lankan culture. According to Saman, in their culture, the role and status of the teacher is not limited to the four walls of the classroom. Instead, the role of the teacher lives amidst the people throughout their lives. Therefore, the notion of equal status for both the teacher and the student does not make much sense in his culture. The important point here is that lack of ‘equity’ in status between teacher and student can not be understood with the notion of ‘power’ and ‘authority’ as it is often done in the Western society. His emphasis that “respecting teachers is in our blood” speaks volumes of the kind of deep rooted,

Inherited spiritual relationship they have with the teachers. What is important is that even though I understood what Saman meant by referring to ‘their blood’, another learner with a different cultural script for role relations for learning would not make sense of it. For instance, once, we were commenting on our interview transcriptions in one of our PhD programs. I brought the transcription of Saman’s interview for the discussion. Interestingly, a student from England got confused over the phrase “*respecting....in our blood*”. She questioned “how can it be there in your blood? In her terms, it is very strange that a student takes the teacher-student relationship that serious. In her cultural point of view, it is an over statement. This incident highlights that when people encounter cultural scripts which are missing in their particular culture, they get surprised, since they are incomprehensible in terms of the cultural scripts available for them. Even if they understand the word meaning of a particular cultural script it would not guarantee that the meaning of a cultural script can be felt by a person from another culture.

There are other cultures where the meaning of the teacher role transcends the contextual meaning.

Oliver: *“Back home... we have the rapport all the time. We meet the teacher on the road, in the market place we call them, ‘hi sir, How are you?’ Even in schools we say ‘good morning sir’ and then they say ‘good morning children’. We have that bond with the teacher. It is not just teaching something and vanishing. He is there, in the community living with you”* (interview; Oliver, 23.02.05).

This quotation from Oliver from Malawi depicts that the teacher’s role transcends the act of teaching to playing a significant role in the community. Owing to this reason, the teacher has to maintain a bond with his students as well as with the whole community. In my view, this kind of role status adds to the subtlety of the role of the teacher and the kind of interactions between the teacher and the community. In such cultures, the responsibility of the teacher toward the learner does not end with the end of the particular lesson. Instead, in such cultures, the status of the teacher will be respected by the society, irrespective of the context. According to respondents like Oliver this respect caters to a moral distance between the teacher and the learner. This suggests that in some cultures the role expectations of the teacher shapes the cultural script for role relations.

Sheng-Yu, the Chinese university teacher was unfolding a more complex kind of a relation between the teacher and the student.

Sheng-Yu: *“I feel here, the teacher –pupil relationship is just simple. You do the lecture, go. That is the end of it. No more. Teachers in China are better. They are the authorities in our country... have the power to change things for future. They are more responsible regarding the future of the students than the university teachers here. We do not just teach and go away. We listen to the students after the classes, understand their problems and be moral guides to them... the students always have a good relationship with the tutors and we are prepared to help them any time” ...*

“...Only spiritually... I would not talk with them as if I am a friend ... It is just spiritual. Like to maintain my space as their teacher”
(interview; Sheng-Yu, 04.04.05).

The ‘power’, ‘distance’ and ‘authority’ articulated by Sheng-Yu contributes to complicated meanings which are fused with their

cultural ways of going about teacher-student relationship. I suppose that this spiritual, obliging, and yet distant relationship may not be easily understood by teachers or students in a Western university. Of course, this kind of relationship is very similar to that of the relation we have with our students back home. The juxtaposition of spiritual closeness and distance portray the complexity of this relationship. Contrary to this, he finds the teacher student relationship in this University as very 'simple'. This kind of relationship, according to him, does not hold any responsibility toward the future of the learner. It seems as if there are no clear cut demarcations, limiting the role of the teacher in Chinese society. It seems to spread through out the life of a teacher and the student.

What is significant is that the distance and authority he describes stem from the close, spiritual bond between the teacher and the students rather than the teacher qualification or authority they hold. The most interesting aspect is the way he describes the authority of the teacher. The students and teachers are not equals. Yet, this relation is not highlighted by power in authority.

It is worth referring to Hofstede's views about the role relations between the student and the teacher, at this point (Hofstede, 1986). His four dimensional model about teacher/student and student/teacher interactions seem to replicate some of the ideas depicted by Saman, Oliver and Sheng-Yu. These three cultures, according to the respondent's view, have collectivist characteristics. They are also large power distance societies. The moral distance they highlight seem to have similar qualities with the kind of teacher-student interaction suggested by Hofstede in societies with collectivist dimension and large power distance dimension.

Speaking about another aspect of the role relations, Viola, from Fiji, told me that she was annoyed by the way the teachers are being treated here. She thinks that teachers, who are considered as adults in her culture should be treated better. She said that she was shocked to see that there is no respect for the teachers here. She told me that *"it is a shame that the teachers are called just by their half names... Jack, Pat..."* According to her, in her culture the teachers are treated with respect and distance.

Respecting the teacher through the way of addressing them is prominent in some other cultures. For instance, the “very friendly”, ‘very feminine’ teacher from Kenya was emphasizing the way of addressing her.

Kengi: *“Calling me Miss Kengi is very important. Even though I told you that I am like a friend to them, I am not.... I am their teacher anyway, and they need to call me Miss. Kenji”* (interview; Kengi, 07.06.05).

At the outset of our interview Kengi was telling me that she is not a traditional, common Kenyan teacher. Rather, she is a teacher, who has modernized ways of thinking about the process of learning. Contrary to her views, when talking about teacher student relationship, Kengi’s Kenyan teacher self came out automatically. Such issues highlight that even though a particular learner claims to be in an intercultural process in relation to learning, one’s own cultural identity in relation to cultural scripts for learning would remain in the remote recesses in the self. And whenever people encounter different cultural scripts for learning, they are capable of

articulating their own cultural ways of going about learning more eloquently. This further suggests that intercultural encounters do not necessarily contribute to changing learners' cultural scripts for learning, even if the learners imagine that they have been changed.

Thus, the discussion above highlights that the learners, who come from different cultures bring different cultural scripts into an intercultural higher education context. These scripts are based on moral and spiritual distance the teachers and learners maintain in their relationships for teaching and learning.

Next, I explain cultural issues for teacher-student relationships in terms of power issues.

7.1.2: Power Distance

In some cultures role relations are interpreted in terms of power and authority held by the teachers, and this section delineates such role relations between teachers and students.

Magi explained their way of going about in teacher-student relationship in the following manner.

Magi: *“In our culture, the teachers... are specialists of the subject they teach. ... have qualifications and not accessible like here. ..., teachers are more conceptual and ... always like to maintain a distance from the students who do not have their knowledge. The students respect them for their power. They have the authority and they take decisions. I do not think that apart from the power or the expertise of knowledge they have, there is anything else to respect in them”* (interview; Magi, 28.06.05).

Magi holds that the student-teacher relationship in higher education in her culture is nothing but power and authority. The distance she describes here, seems to have been created by the knowledge gap between the teacher and the student. It is the power of knowledge that is been respected in the French culture. Therefore it seems that the status of the teacher is given priority over the teacher role. Magi herself is a teacher in France and she never mentioned that they have a moral rapport either with their teachers or with their

students. Further, she seems to relate qualifications to accessibility of the teachers, thus, suggesting that qualifications in relation to knowledge make them unapproachable to power less students. Hence, the word respect here implies imposed respect. This sheds light on the notion of hierarchy as well as authority. Drawing a contrast to their script for teacher-student relationship, Magi told me about her experience of teaching in schools in Sri Lanka. According to her, in Sri Lanka, the schools are more 'religious', and the teachers are respected as parents.

Thus, Magi highlights two significant issues in relation to teacher - student role relation. First, the distance drawn by external factors such as qualification and knowledge contributes to hierarchy, which is not appreciated by the learners. Second, such role relations between the teacher and the learner influence the way of interpreting the role of the teacher in an intercultural setting. For instance, she told me that:

Magi: *"The lessons in this University are sometimes frustrating. The teachers encourage us to speak and we get lost in stupid*

debates. Even if what the students say is not to the point, the teacher says 'excellent'. Not enough teachers' input. Back home, after a lesson we have something to take home. Here? We want to take something from the money we pay... in France, when the students ask something we never say 'I don't know.' The teacher is supposed to be on the top, an expert. But ..., here, they simply say 'I... don know'. My goodness!" (Interview; Magi, 28, 06, 05).

This portrays how interpretations of an intercultural teaching learning situation can be influenced by the cultural scripts individual learners bring into teaching-learning situations. The lessons in this host university has become frustrating owing to the 'stupid debates' and the lack of 'something' to be taken home. 'Something' emphasizes that learners from Magi's culture expects lessons to be occasions, which add to the knowledge of the learners' in a quantitative manner. In her view, knowledge should flow from the expert teacher to the student. This implies lack of active interaction between the teacher and the student, whose relationship is shaped by the assumed intellectual power of the teachers.

The significant aspect in relation to this kind of power distance in the teacher-student role relation is that learners do not seem to appreciate it. For instance, Magi expressed her disagreement about the power issues intertwined with knowledge expertise of the teachers. However, in this British university she expects the teachers to act as expertise. This factor implies that students, who come from different parts of the world to the Institute of Education in London, expect to continue their cultural scripts for role relations.

Another aspect of the teacher student role relations was described by Donald who comes from Uganda. In his culture, the teachers in higher education are distant from the students in terms of knowledge expertise as well the social recognition they gain as teachers. This distance and their authority as teachers influence in a negative manner for learning in higher education.

Donald: *“Back home...it is very difficult since, we have a problem with supervision. You struggle a lot on your own and it is very frustrating. You are not assisted properly... they would not help you*

much... they make us feel it is something which only they can do and not us. It is discouraging... a PhD can go for ten years” (interview; Donald, 06.06.05).

Donald was telling me how the authorities the teachers hold in relation to knowledge discourage higher studies in his culture. It seems that the teachers use their authority to prevent or demotivate others reaching their level in knowledge. Donald thus highlights that learners do not appreciate cultural scripts for role relations when the particular relation distances the learner from the teacher as well as from the process of learning.

In the meantime, according to him, the role of the teacher is considered very important in his culture, and teachers are treated with respect. Nevertheless, the teachers can act regardless of the kind of role they have been given by the society.

Similar stories were narrated about authority and its negative influence on doing higher studies by the respondents from Nigeria

and Kenya. These respondents mentioned that they appreciate the kind of ‘simple’, ‘informal’ relationship between the teacher and the student they experience in the Institute of Education.

Nevertheless, there are occasions when the script the respondents experience in the Institute of Education, in relation to teacher-student role relation has been questioned by some of them. Interestingly, some stories suggest invisible, unspoken subtlety in the teacher–student role relations that exist in this British university. For the most part, these stories unfold a different version of power and authority that is not common in most of the other cultures for learning. According to these respondents, teacher-student role relation, which is seemingly informal and intimate, encapsulates distant, formal qualities. Let us next talk about such stories about cultural script for role relations between the teacher and the student.

7.1.3: Close Distance

Close distance, as it is used in this section, refers to the seemingly informal, yet formal or ‘formally informal’ type of

role relations that seem to exist between the teachers and the students in certain cultures.

This is how Anita, the Italian student describe the ‘formally informal’ nature of the teachers in the Institute of Education.

Anita: “... even though they pretend to be informal, they are formal. I see little difference between the teacher in Italy and the teacher in this institute. Both of them teach. What else?”

“... Teachers are more superficial here. They do these fancy moving around the class and letting students shout and discuss. You need not be behind the desk in order to be behind the desk. Even if you are wandering around the class... you sit on the table ...here also, the teacher is the teacher. The same old Italian teacher, who structures the lesson and decides the way of the lesson. They are very formal...If you see them on the street, they would not even look at you. And they call themselves informal?” (interview; Anita, 29, 09, 04).

Speaking about the problems faced by the overseas learners in Western universities, in relation to approachability of staff, Lewis (1984:103) describes:

“Where students had experienced learning in contexts which were very one-sided, and where they were not accustomed to being treated in sociable terms by faculty staff, their settling in periods were rather difficult”

Lewis’s comment seems to suggest that when learners with different scripts for role relations come to Western universities, they find it difficult to get adjusted. This of course can be accepted true regarding Anita’s script. Nevertheless, the idea that the Western teachers’ ‘sociable’ treatment, is not understood by the (unsociable?) overseas learners, does not seem to make sense in relation to what Anita says about the teachers who are superficial and distant from the learners. Lewis’s comment moreover, implies that teachers who do not understand the cultural scripts of overseas learners interpret their behaviour in different ways.

In Anita's point of view, the teachers in the Institute of Education share the same formal characteristics of the teachers in Italy. What is important in her argument is that whatever physical movements the teachers pretend to have during the lesson, the role of the teacher remains formal and authoritative. Teachers hold the authority of taking decisions and structuring the whole lesson. This raises some questions related to the interaction between the teacher and the students for learning in this British University. First, what kind of teacher-student interaction for learning is expected from learners who come here with different cultural scripts for role relations for learning? Where can we draw the line between the informal, simple teacher-student relationship and formal, distant teacher-student relation for learning in an intercultural learning setting? Interestingly, referring to the role of the teacher outside the classroom, she mentions about the distance of the teacher who would not even look at the students. This particular idea hints about the role expectations of the teacher role. The students from some cultures expect the teacher role to be more than a facilitator of learning inside the classroom. In Anita's point of view, the mere way of going about teaching in the classroom can

mask the actual role and status of the teacher as well as the learner in some cultures. Thus, according to her, the seemingly informal characteristic of the teacher in this British University does not mean that the teacher-student relation is close.

At the same time, it emerged that some respondents think that the kind of teacher-student role relation they experience can influence their process of learning significantly.

7.1.4: When Mohammad can not Find the Mountain

Pamela, from Finland, described how her learning process has been affected by the distant role relations between the teacher-student she experienced in this British University.

Pamela: “... *There should be somebody to listen to you and talk with. Here, there was no body, I mean teachers ... when I was doing my MA. If the Mohammad can not find the mountain the mountain should go to Mohammad. But neither happens here. I*

as a teacher should go to my students and tease out from my students what kind of learning is occurring. Even though they say that it is learner centered here, it does not happen when the learner does not know where to turn to... Here, the teachers did not understand me and I did not understand them... when we come here the teachers think that we will understand their ways of doing things within one minute” (Interview; Pamela, 25.06.05).

Pamela’s feelings toward the teacher-student relationship she experienced in this institution suggest a kind of disappointment. It highlights that the expectations of the learner, who is novice in the new pedagogic situation, and the teachers in the host culture do not harmonize. Both the teachers and the learners seem to expect that the other party should understand them. This obviously can contribute to role conflicts in relation to role expectations between the role of the teacher and the learner. It further implies that some academics in British universities assume that the overseas learners will come to know the educational values and practices of the host culture without much effort and thus, will adjust without conflict. Nevertheless,

Pamela suggests that such assumptions can bring about frustrations in learners, and they can negatively influence their learning process. Thus, she highlights that gap in the teacher-student relationship brought about by distance can make the experience of learning overseas very confusing.

Talking about the distant teacher in the Institute of Education, Seema describes that the impact of this distance can limit the opportunity of learning through mutual exchange of ideas between the teacher and the student.

Seema: “...*They are not friendly and approachable. You know, I tried to talk with them from the beginning, since I like to get to know them and learn things. But very rarely they would ask you back about yourself. They will never want to continue any kind of long conversation with you. ...They show as if they are so very helpful and highly approachable. O...h...not at all. Teach you something, gone, that is the end of it. ... Maintain a good relationship, you need to exchange information. Here the teachers are not that. You just pay, pay, and pay and be gone.*

They were never interested in me as a student or in my questions” (interview; Seema, 30.09.04).

Seema from Brazil seems disappointed about the role relation between the teacher and the student in this British university. She seems to expect two characteristics from teacher-student role relation in this foreign university. First, she expects that there should be a reciprocal relationship between the teacher and the learner in terms of exchanging ideas. Second, she considers that intercultural leaning atmospheres needs to widen learning possibilities of learners through teacher-student interaction. She mentioned that her cultural scripts for role relations between the teacher and learner are more interactive and close. What happens is that, when she finds a different script for role relations, she finds it difficult to accept, and hence she complains about it. It seems that Seema is facing a role conflict in terms of her native experience of playing the role of a more interactive learner and her present role of isolated learner, in a British university. Her repetitive reference to ‘pay’ments suggests that in this British university a learner means nothing more than a number crediting the account in the registry and that the role relation between the

teacher and the student is shaped by this commercialized system of higher education. In particular, she views that the approachable friendly quality of the teacher in this institution is only a pretension. What is significant about Seema's views is they depict the possible disappointment learners can experience, once they find that the host culture of learning promotes a different cultural script for role relations between the teacher and the student.

Lee, who comes from Hong-Kong, portrays a creative version of the teacher-student role relations in the Institute of Education.

Lee: *"Here, the people are blank and no impression on their face. ..., they pretend they are very happy and sensitive. ..., we just do not shout 'ha...I, it is naaaa...ise' like they do it here... They try to be humorous to take humour as part of life. Teachers are animated in the classrooms. ... It is a programmed way of showing humour. ...they have the mask on... not laughing in their heart. The kind of engagement is not frank"* (interview; Lee, 11.01.05).

Lee, who works in an arts theatre, uses professional discourse to describe the artificial conduct of the teachers. Thus, for him the “friendly humorous” teachers in this University are ‘animated’. Emphasizing his disbelief in the teachers’ behaviour he mentions that they wear a mask, suggesting that teachers are pretentious. Interestingly, he later mentioned that he does not like the very strict nature of their teachers back home. However, he never used the discourse he used for the teachers in the British university to talk about teachers in Hong Kong. Does this mean that learners can sometimes be prejudiced about role relations they are introduced into by the host institution of learning?

Another aspect worth paying attention is the way learners from different cultures draw similarities between the general assumptions regarding another culture to interpret role relations for learning. Here, Lee seems to interpret the ‘programmed’ behaviour inside the classroom in terms of the general Asian understanding of the Western human being, whom, sometimes they have never met. Even though Lee talks about himself as a person, who is in an intercultural process as a human being, his interpretations seem to have coloured by generalizations of cultural others. Lee thus,

suggests the possibility of learners from different cultures to make sense of role relations for learning, based on their understanding of the general culture of the host learning culture. Such awareness tells me that learning is social and thus, cultural scripts for learning are often encapsulated in other, wider social issues.

This discussion on ‘close distance’ between the teachers and students in higher education suggests two main factors. First, that some role relations, which are seemingly close, can actually be distant. Second, some role relations, which are actually close, can be interpreted as distant by learners depending on the cultural scripts for role relations they are used to in their own culture.

In summary, the above section on cultural scripts for role relations highlight that there are different cultural scripts for role relationships for learning in terms of teacher-student relationship, in different cultures. And I highlight that role relations in relation to teacher-student can be discussed in terms of the distance the teachers and the students maintain in their relationships. I thus, described three main types of cultural

scripts for role relations between the teacher and the student; cultural script for moral distance, cultural script for power distance and cultural script for close distance.

There are two more significant issues worth unfolding before bringing this discussion to a closure. First, my narration of the emerged cultural scripts for role relations between teacher and student, highlighting three sub themes, does not mean that cultural scripts can easily and comprehensively be compartmentalized. They do change over time across cultures. Second, the cultural scripts for role relations can influence the interaction for learning among learners, based on the behaviour of learners in terms of role relations between the teacher and the student. Which follows is a brief discussion of these two issues.

7.1.5: Changing nature of Distance

One significant characteristic of cultural scripts for role relations for learning is that they are not static in nature. According to some respondents, cultural scripts for role relations in their own cultures

have changed over time. For instance, Freeda described how the distance between the teacher and the student is being changed from that of distance of respect to distance of authority, in Cyprus.

Freeda: "Teachers have the hierarchy. They are distant from us. It is boring and stressful. There, the emphasis is on the teacher. It is wrong. Teachers know everything. That is why we go to school to learn from them. So, listen to them silently."

"When my dad was a student, when the teacher comes to the coffee shop or the church, they all say 'welcome sir, sit down.' ... when they have a problem in life they will get advice from the teacher. Now, it is changing. Teacher is not the expert in the society any more. Society is getting more personalized" (interview; Freeda, 15.02.05).

Freeda depicts the changing nature of the role relation between the teacher and the student in their culture. This change seems to have stemmed from the change in the society from a collectivist structure to an individualistic one. In her point of view, in the present society,

the image of the teacher as the expert in the society is no longer important. The society is getting more personalized, and the role of the teacher is getting limited to institutions of education. In such institutions, the role of the teacher is being respected for the knowledge they can offer the learners. This depicts the changing role of the teacher from a recognized role in the community to a segregated role of distance, and the characteristics of the emerging cultural script for role relations is not very much welcome by the learners who are used to a different cultural script for role relations between the teacher and the student.

Now, let us move on to the second aspect that emerged as significant in relation to the role relations between the teacher and the student in higher education contexts.

7.1.6: What is Theatre there is Classroom here

I now argue that the kind of teacher-pupil rapport shapes the way the students and the teachers behave or conduct themselves inside the classrooms. For instance, the behaviour of learners as well as

the teachers inside the classrooms in this British university has been a surprise to most of the respondents, who have come from different cultures.

Here, the meaning of behaviour refers to the ways the learners go about in their conduct as learners during the teaching-learning situations. Most of the students who come to this British university with ‘moral distance’ teacher–student relation seem to get surprised about the way some learners behave in the presence of teachers. According to respondents, some native students’ behaviour is disrespectful and amoral and this ‘amoral’ behaviour symbolizes the cultural script for role relations in this culture of learning. For instance, John, the student from Kenya talked at length about his surprise regarding the behaviour of the students in the Institute of Education, highlighting the way the female learners dress for classes.

John: *“I think culture is a big picture and it influences in learning...You know, one of the biggest surprises was the way some girls dress in the class. Good God! Some come into the class half naked. I could never imagine. Only in the films you find something*

like this back home. But here, right in front of you a girl is wearing like this... Walking to the classroom in a very tight, short dress, which is very scary.”

“...I got it very rough, since I am not used it. It takes your mind away and feel that is wrong. I found it very disturbing. In my country someone dressed like that in the classroom will be asked to go out. I kept on thinking this is wrong. How can students behave like this in front of their teachers? I never wanted to talk or associate with such a girl. May be she is innocent. But, I do not like to have any association with her” (interview: John, 15.02.05).

John's ideas delineate how the cultural otherness of learners become active once they confront a different cultural ways of doing learning. John was cinematically describing how the ways some female students dress in this British university disturb his process of learning inside the classroom. Words such as 'half naked' and 'rough' suggest that when people encounter different codes of conduct to their own set code of conduct, they get surprised. Moreover, this surprise can be articulated with innocent judgments. That is why John sense this as 'wrong' and that he is not willing to

associate with girls, who come to class 'half naked'. He compares the university students' classroom behaviour in England to the behaviour of stars in cinemas in Kenya. This depicts the degree of the difference as well as the surprise he experiences. What is cinema in Kenya is actual life in university classrooms in England. The significant outcome of this understanding is that it prevents him interacting with learners, who behave 'wrong' in the classroom. This suggests that the cultural scripts for learner conduct, the learners bring to host universities influence the way of making sense of interaction for learning. In my view, the world in the classroom, in intercultural learning situations, should provide wider horizons for learners to exchange rich learning experiences. Contrary to this, it seems that sometimes, meeting of two different sets of values for learner conduct can result in distancing learners from one another.

It is significant that learners from overseas are very conscious about the behaviour of the teachers as well. For instance, majority of the students told stories about the way the teachers behave during lessons in this Western university. For instance, Abaz, the student from Pakistan told me the following.

Abaz: *“At the beginning it was shocking. I can give you an example. ... One person came for the lecture. He came to the class and sat behind the table. Kept his legs on the table and sitting like that, put both his hands behind his head and started talking! Quite shocking. How can a teacher do that? Can a teacher behave like this in front of students? I had never experienced teachers doing something like that in the class. That created a different image of the teacher”* (interview; Abaz, 30.10.04).

It was not very difficult for me to make sense of the story of Abaz, since we share more or less the same kind of values and morals in terms of role relationships for learning. The word ‘shocking’ suggests the intensity of the feeling of difference regarding the way the teachers go about in teaching learning contexts between the two cultures; Pakistan and England. His surprise is so much that he questions the possibility of a teacher behaving like that in front of students? On the contrary, if asked about this particular behaviour from either a teacher or a student from English culture they would be surprised, since it is a very common way of behaving, which is not noticed by anyone in their culture.

Abaz's story delineates the possibility of diverse interpretations regarding human behaviour, when people from different cultures interact with each other. This again suggests that learners with different cultural scripts do not very easily comprehend novel scripts for role relations. In the meantime, this urges one to question, what do we mean by the set code of conduct in relation to teacher behaviour in an intercultural learning setting? How can two sets of cultural scripts for role relations encounter without surprise?

Having explained the emergent themes in relation to cultural scripts for role relations for learning in terms of teacher-student relations, I now move on to discuss the themes that emerged regarding role relations in terms of students' peer interaction for learning.

7.2; Different Cultural Scripts for Peer Interactions for Learning.

I now argue that there are different ways of going about in learner interactions for learning, in different cultures. The respondents imply that their experience in interacting with their peers in this

British Institution for learning can be interpreted in two main ways. First, interaction as a source of illumination in the process of learning. And second, interaction as a source of 'losing face', or showing one's difficulties in learning and gaining shame.

First, I describe stories which consider interaction for learning as illuminating the process of learning.

7.2.1: Interaction as a Bonus

Some respondents hold that interaction among learners enriches the experience of learning. The learners, who come from cultures where such notions are promoted, feel that the intercultural setting in this university should contribute to active peer interaction for learning.

Stella, the university teacher from Bulgaria, who expects that interaction among learners enriches the learning experience, told me the following story.

Stella: "I find it difficult to be friendly with the British students. They only interact with the natives. And in the class, I feel they do not say all what is important. They will talk a lot and talk nothing. Some students never talk with us while discussing. They think only they know. Of course, they can talk since it is their language. And they are not ready to share any of their ideas with others. Even outside the classroom they would not look at you. This will never happen in Bulgaria. But, here the Japanese are so interesting to me. They are not like British students. If you ask a question they will talk about it in the way they feel about it. Chinese too"

"We are a so friendly country and here it is very different. In the University we always help each other and talk about learning"

(interview; Stella, 26.06.05).

In Stella's point of view, the native students in this British university do not welcome interaction with the overseas learners for learning purposes. And inside the classrooms, the native students dominate discussions, since English is their own language. As Stella mentions what role does language play in assumptions regarding learner interactions? When she says that even outside

the class there is no interaction with the native learners, the question is whether it is due to cultural differences or due to cultural hegemony? Do native learners assume that there is nothing they can learn from overseas learners as some of the respondents mention? Are there any possibilities for learners from different parts of the world to interact for the purpose of enriching their learning experiences? As Stella mentions Chinese and Japanese students are prepared to interact with others for learning.

Azar, from Pakistan, holds a similar view to that of Stella in relation to interaction for learning with other students.

Azar: "...and interaction is entirely different here. Natives are more talkative. When it comes to learning you work alone and I work alone. Here working is always individual and isolated. In Pakistan we always learn together and help each other...as a team"

"...everybody here is busy and no body will help you...also from human perspective it is common to care and share the problems and help someone who needs help. But here, no student will wait

and listen to you. Being among friends is a big bonus. You can always share your understanding and knowledge with each other. In Pakistan, if you ask help, from someone, he will stop his work to help you. Here, it will never happen. Everybody is busy with their own studies and no one is bothered to think about the others” (interview; Azar, 01.10.04).

Azar emphasizes the difference of going about in learner interaction in terms of learning in two different cultures. He feels that in this British university, the native learners are not willing to interact with others for learning purposes. It seems that he seeks ‘help’ from the other students. Seeking ‘help’ highlights the overseas learners’ desire to interact with the natives for learning purposes. However, he seems to have assured that it will ‘never’ happen here. While restorying this I felt that there is a gap between the desire of the overseas learner to interact with the natives for learning and the response of the native students. One reason for this gap seems the availability of different cultural scripts for role relations for learning in different cultures.

While some learners from some cultures are looking forward to interact with others for learning, some others deliberately withdraw from interacting with fellow students for learning, since their cultural scripts for interaction for learning does not imply that interaction is significant for learning. Which follows is a discussion about the emergent themes in relation to such cultural scripts for going about role relations among peers for learning.

7.2.2: Interaction is Losing Face

Sheng-Yu's story portrays how some learners willingly evade interaction for learning. In his point of view, even though Chinese people are very friendly, in higher education the learners are 'kind of aloof', and do not like to discuss learning with peers. He told me that there are three more Chinese in his own class here. Yet they do not get together to discuss about learning. What he thinks is that talking about the difficulties or one's own learning process with peers may contribute to losing face (losing "Mianzi"). "Mianzi" *"represents prestige and honour that accrues to a person as a result of success and possibly ostentatious behaviour before others"* (Bond and Hwang 1986, in Hwang, Francesco and Kessler,

2003:74). Therefore, the problems and issues the learners encounter may not be discussed, since they think that it will reveal their lack of knowledge in a certain area of learning, which then results in losing their face in front of fellow learners.

Raju, who comes from Malaysia, seems to hold views about interaction for learning which resonate with that of Sheng-Yu, but, with different contexts.

Raju: “...*We are competing with races, with neighbours, with friends and colleagues...with everyone for qualifications. We are very lonely as learners competing with all others. O...h the Chinese in my country...They really conquer the field of science and maths. They get straight ‘A’s for all the subjects. So, we are trying hard, learning to our best. It is lonely. But, we like the status. If I have a Dr. in front of my name! Haaa.....it is a big thing and everybody will say here is a Dr..., definitely more respected*” (interview; Raju, 3.3.05).

Raju's story depicts two significant issues regarding role relations for interaction for learning. First, role relations are basically shaped by external factors; qualifications, prestige and status. Second, education, being one of the major sources for social mobility, gives rise to competition among fellow learners, encouraging learning in isolation. Thus, Raju's intention of doing higher education is associated with prestige. While talking with me he repeatedly luxuriated in the imagination of being treated more respectfully if he had a doctorate. In his culture, learning at Post Graduate level seems a lonely journey, cramming to be the fittest to get the limited opportunities in the society. Therefore, they do not interact with their fellow learners. Raju's story suggests that cultural scripts for role relations for learning are shaped by social factors such as gaining success and power in life through educational qualifications. What I felt is that Raju's story gives another version of mianzi.

The discussion above suggests that there are different cultural scripts for role relations in different cultures in terms of learning.

At this stage I find it is important to recall the emergent themes I explained in the above two chapters. In chapter 6, I argued that there are different as well as some similar cultural scripts for

different activities for learning. I discussed this theme under four sub themes; cultural scripts for talking, cultural scripts for writing, cultural scripts for reading and cultural scripts for thinking for learning. The emergent themes in relation to role relations were discussed highlighting two significant sub themes; different cultural scripts for role relations between the teacher and the student, and role relations for learning among peer learners for learning. Summing up the discussion in chapter seven I highlight that there are different cultural scripts as well as few similar cultural scripts for learning in terms of different activities for learning, and role relations for learning.

Apart from the above meta- narratives I constructed in this chapter, there are significant other meta-narratives which lead me to create the bigger picture in doing this inquiry. Next, I move on to tell you about such reflexive meta-narratives constructed by the respondents, during interview conversations.

Chapter 8; Illuminating Cultural Scripts and the Dynamics of Encountering Difference

Narratives tell stories. And meta-narratives tell stories about stories. This chapter articulates how the respondents, while narrating their experience, stood back from their experience to say what they think about what they say. Through these meta-stories I found my respondents being reflexive of their own stories as well as of the act of telling their stories.

It is noteworthy that the act of being reflexive, both on the part of the respondents as well as my self as the researcher, contributed considerably to the process of constructing knowledge that is in focus in this thesis. Hence, I should mention the role played by reflexivity in doing this thesis, before starting the discussion on respondents' meta- narratives.

8. 1: Contextualizing Stories; Taking one Step Back

This section brings into focus the reflexive quality that is enveloped in the process of making sense of data. Of course,

reflexivity crept in to the process of doing this inquiry through out. At this point, it is important to highlight how reflexivity was achieved while analyzing the stories as well as writing about the process of sense making in this thesis.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the quest in this thesis stemmed from a personal experience as an overseas student learning in a British university. Hence, inevitably reflexivity is embedded in the process of doing this inquiry, since my history as an overseas learner as well as my biography, together with my perspectives, influenced the way of going about this inquiry. However, as in the case of some research writing, I did not mean simply to give a heavy dose of my personal experience to the reader, and say I am being reflexive. On the contrary, in this inquiry I provide the reader with an analytic account of how my personal and academic history intertwined with my theoretical perspectives helped me to make sense of the stories constructed, while doing this inquiry in a particular manner.

Before moving further, I will make a brief note on the meaning of reflexivity. The notion of reflexivity, in relation to doing sociological research has begun to be important with the recognition that social researchers are integral to the worlds they study. In the meantime, feminist, post-structural, hermeneutic, interpretive and critical discourses seem to recognize the contextually and historically grounded, linguistically constituted nature of knowledge and understanding (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). According to Mauthner and Doucet (1998:121) reflexivity means *“reflecting upon and understanding our own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies as researchers, and making explicit where we are located in relation to our research respondents.”*

Considering this particular meaning I feel that rather than mere reflecting, reflexivity is much closer to researcher's critical reflection upon his or her multiple aspects of the biography, and the impact of reflection on the kind of knowledge we construct. Addressing the critical aspect in reflexivity they next mention that reflexivity refers to the critical role we play in creating, interpreting and theorizing research data. It seems that this particular meaning

only highlights reflexivity in relation to the processes of collection of data, interpreting them and building theory. They do not talk about the possibility of the presence of reflexivity within the whole process of doing an inquiry. Thus, I feel that this meaning does not articulate the kind of reflexivity I experienced in doing my inquiry. Even though I chose to write about reflexivity at this particular stage in writing my thesis, I experienced reflexive engagement right from the beginning of embarking on this study. Therefore, I feel that the meaning of reflexivity given by Steier (1991) matches with my way of making sense of reflexivity in doing sociological studies. In his terms, reflexivity refers to a turning back on to a self and a *“way in which circularity and self-reference appear in inquiry, as we contextually recognize the various mutual relationships in which our knowing activities are embedded”* (Steier: 1991:163).

The significant aspect of Steier’s view is that it highlights the relatedness and the connectedness of our knowing and how it is embedded in the stories the researchers tell. The presence of the embedded connectedness as well as the relatedness between the researchers’ knowing and the knowledge he or she constructs,

provide evidence for what we claim we claim in our knowledge construction process. And Steier argues that omission of this relatedness leaves the constructing activity in the research process unacknowledged. Thus, reflexivity helps relate research stories that allow the teller to tell stories, which encapsulate the researcher's construction process as well as the teller. In my view, this way of making sense of reflexivity is in harmony with the social constructionist view that knowledge is being constructed by human beings.

Reflecting on the process of doing my inquiry, and Steier's way of making sense of reflexivity, I find that I have been reflexive in the process of doing this inquiry. Beginning from the very choice of the topic that is in focus in this inquiry, the approaches and methodologies I employed in doing this simple project, including the methods of data analysis, writing and reading have all been influenced by my epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions as well as other personal, interpersonal and emotional issues. For instance, reflecting on the interviewing process, the very choice of using active interviewing and the act of interviewing have been shaped by my personal, professional as well as

epistemological understandings about knowledge construction. I practiced a reflexive approach in relation to what the respondents told me, what I thought they told me, the theoretical framework I used as well as the knowledge generated with the respondents. For instance, while in the process of interviewing, I wrote down reflexive notes about each interview in small papers and pinned them to each relevant transcription. These notes comprised very brief notes on why I asked a particular question and not something else, why I did not make any comment on a particular piece of story or why I understood a particular story in the way I did. In the same vein, the kind of relationship I maintained with my respondents seem to have been shaped by my self as another fellow foreign student in a British university as well as my role as the researcher. Reflexive understanding of my location in relation to my respondents helped me maintain a kind of oneness between my self and my respondents, which closely distanced me from the respondents and the stories we constructed. This contributed to having an intellectual dialogue with the data, as well as my own self as the interviewer, inviting me to penetrate reflexively in to the kind of knowledge we constructed during the interview, and how that particular knowledge has been constructed. Engaging with data in a

reflexive manner also helped me to be more open and faithful to the data I am reconstructing. It further provided me with the understanding that the knowledge I am constructing has not been out there waiting for me to unearth, but, I have been constructing and reconstructing it together with the stories constructed by the respondents.

Moreover, as themes emerged I went back to my respondents, talked with them about their ideas of these themes and questioned about my understanding about the stories they were talking with me. Further to that, I went back to the literature to critically understand and question my theoretical perspective and the actual theories emerging in the inquiry. These processes helped me to find new ways of interacting in my interviews, while throwing new light on my continuous process of analysis.

The reflexivity I practiced in doing this thesis also helped me in shaping my process of writing about making sense of data. For instance, the first time I wrote a particular chapter, I felt that I am emotionally and passionately attached to what I write. When I was

reading my draft chapters to produce the thesis finally, I began to read the text I have written with the awareness of the embeddedness of my multiple locations in constructing the text in a particular manner. I did not play the role of neutral writer, writing innocently about the process of sense making. Instead, as I select, interpret and represent the stories of the respondents, to construct the meta-narratives, they inevitably got reshaped and reconstructed by me. This awareness helped me to take one step back from the text I have produced and read it as a reader rather than the writer of the text, questioning my choice of language in articulating particular constructions. I strongly felt that I distanced my self from the text I have produced.

Through out the process of doing this inquiry I turned back on my self, and gained the understanding that the knowledge I am constructing is connected and related to multiple social and personal locations of myself as well as my respondents. Therefore, by being reflexive, I explicitly portray the presence of my self as the researcher who is actively assembling knowledge in doing this inquiry.

The next section explains how respondents' reflexivity contributed to new and significant knowledge in the process of constructing knowledge in this thesis.

8.2: Reflexive Respondents positioning themselves in a Wider Picture

While living the process of restorying the narratives of respondents, I felt that stories never occur in a vacuum and are never produced in isolation. Productions of stories occur within particular contexts and are told in different layers of meanings and contexts. Narrators themselves appeared to have meta ways of sensing their cultural scripts and they locate them while storying them. One may question the applicability of these meta-stories at this particular stage in doing this thesis. While reflecting on respondents' reflections of the stories, I felt that the thesis is talking to me in a different sense. At the outset, I was not quite sure as to what it was telling me. A deeper reflection on respondents' reflections of their stories helped me make sense of my respondents' meta-narratives. Unfolding them at this point would make the sojourn of constructing knowledge in this thesis explicit and more illuminating.

Therefore, this discussion explains these meta-narratives in some depth, using examples. The emergent meta-narratives highlight that the respondents are positioning themselves in varying ways, in terms of living the experience in a context of intercultural higher education. This act of positioning seems to portray four significant aspects; issues of power and knowledge, interactions for learning, different domains of learning and institutional stories about learning. Even though I talk about four different aspects in relation to learner positioning, these aspects do overlap in my discussion, since they are interrelated. Toward the end of this discussion, I describe how these aspects of learner positioning explain the emergent themes in relation to cultural scripts for learning in an intercultural university.

8.2.1: Knowledge and Power

This section articulates how respondents addressed different versions of power and knowledge emphasizing the role of history in shaping these power issues as well as knowledge issues in relation to an intercultural context of higher education.

Some respondents narrated their stories of going about learning in a context of intercultural higher education, while relating their own cultural ways of learning to their political history. For instance, Pat, from South Africa, was explaining their cultural script for speaking for learning in terms of their socio-cultural and political history.

Pat: *"...Yes, we have to behave that way due to our country's history. The Whites are free to talk since they have dominated us for a long time. Blacks are more reserved and they think that the teachers should not be questioned. We have been under the Whites for a long time. They have been the controllers... This reflects in our classroom teaching and learning. They feel very free to talk ... give their opinions, go against teachers' point of view. But, we being the dependents have a culture of dependency. We think... the authority should not be questioned..."* (Interview; Pat, 18.10.04).

Here, Pat is drawing relations between their political history of being a British colony and the way they go about speaking for learning. In her terms, they have lost or have suppressed the power of initiating ideas as a result of being colonized by the Whites in the

past. Colonization, according to her, has shaped their way of thinking about power and authority thus, constructing a dependent culture. She seems to imply that this dependent culture has influenced their views about construction of knowledge. For instance, she suggests that the ownership of knowledge lies with the authority and thus, constructing knowledge is a simple, top to bottom process. Therefore, ownership of knowledge lies with the more powerful authority rather than learners. This further implies that in such a context knowledge refers to absolutes passed down from the experts. This raises the question what is knowledge as it is viewed in different cultures? Who owns knowledge and how different cultures make sense of knowledge ownership. In that case, how significant is the notion of “power” in terms of intercultural learning?

Similarly to Pat’s reflection, Lee, from Hong-Kong was reflecting on their political history and learner positioning in his culture. According to him, they have been trained “as slaves” to be obedient. He related this notion of slavery to their political history.

Lee: “...*We were colonized by the British ...people were pointed at and got the work done, in the way they want. We are a culture of obedience. We have the feeling of slavery in the classroom...not much freedom to argue or say our opinion...We have been under the British and had no much freedom to argue...*” (interview; Lee, 11.01.05).

Lee, highlighting their political history and its impact on classroom behaviour, implies issues of power, imperialism and authority connected to the process of knowledge construction. The word “slavery” epitomizes their lack of power in initiating knowledge construction through interaction. It further suggests the entrapped predicament of learners whose desire to contribute in constructing knowledge has been submerged by the authority. He implies that the cultural script of being a learner in their culture, to a certain extent, is a particular construction of their political history. Thus, according to him, their “passive” identity is a social construction. Learners are not passive owing to innate quality. It is their political history, classroom ethics, power and other factors, which pressurise them to be quiet in the classroom. Most importantly, Lee’s explanation of their cultural script of being a learner suggests that

learners do not readily categorize or classify themselves as “passive” or “active”. Rather, they tend to describe their ways of going about learning in terms of significant other issues such as history, power issues and politics.

Another significant aspect portrayed by the meta-narratives of respondents refers to their views about the learner contributions in relation to the act of knowledge construction.

8.2.2: Expert Teachers and Novice Learners

Abaz, Aameena, Magi and Rani were reflecting on the act of learning, referring to knowledge as a substance that can be bought or taken in as packets. Therefore, while in the Institution they try to gain as much knowledge as they can, from teachers and texts books and store that knowledge for later use. For instance, Magi from France seem to have got disappointed since the lessons in this institute could not fill the pages of her note books. It seems as if her main concern of coming to the Institute

to do a Masters degree is to ‘collect’ some knowledge from the teachers, rather than contributing to knowledge construction.

Similarly to Magi, Aameena assumes that books and teachers are the sole providers of knowledge. Hence, the notion of constructing knowledge is not very easy for her to understand. Instead, she assumes that knowledge is just there for her to read and listen. This was the case with Abaz and Rani. Both of them told me that they were not exposed to the notion of alternative truths previously. Truth is given by the experts and learners copy this absolute truth from them in terms of lecture notes. Such practices lead us to think whether construction of knowledge has different meanings in different cultures, depending on their beliefs on epistemology as well as the power and authority of the role of the teacher and the learner.

While some learners’ reflections go back to political history as well as social cultural beliefs, some others’ reflections are cast on the relation between social-economic future of individual self and learning.

8.2.3: Knowledge; Finding a Way through Life

Sheng Yu's reflections on the experience of learning bring to light the social and economic significance of knowledge in a fast moving society.

Talking about the hard working quality of the Chinese learners, he emphasized that it is the present Chinese society that urges the learners to work hard. Even though many researchers talk about the relationship between the Confucian ethic and Chinese desire to learn, Sheng-Yu never mentioned about it (On in Watkins and Biggs, 1996; Li, 2001, 2002; Chen and Stevenson 1995 in Bempechat and Drago-Severson, 1999). In Sheng-Yu's terms, the individual's responsibility to achieve success in life is stronger in China due to lack of social welfare. He holds that education is one of the major sources of upward social mobility in Chinese society. Thus, he assumes that education in Chinese culture is intertwined with achieving individual's identity. And he told me that "*it is through education that we have to find our way through life*".

Sheng-Yu's reflections invite us to rethink the meaning of knowledge, the process of achieving knowledge as well as who is worthy of knowledge in different cultures. For instance, he seems to suggest that those, who work hard to achieve education, are worthy of knowledge. He further implies that seeking knowledge is synonymous to seeking "success" in life. This implies that knowledge means economic and social power which brings about a particular identity for the individual.

Having described the reflections of Sheng-yu, I move on to explain how respondents' meta-narratives position themselves in relation to interactions for learning.

8.3: Learner Positioning when Encountering Difference

This section discusses about the respondents' reflections on their interaction with others for learning, in a context of intercultural higher education. It explains how respondents, who come to learn in an intercultural context, act in relation to the difference they encounter in the new learning context. The emergent issues

portrayed that the respondents' actions are centered on the concepts of change and learner identity. Which follows is a discussion about these emergent concepts.

There is one significant issue, which is worth mentioning at this point. This section discusses the cultural or the institutional script of the Institute of Education as they emerged through the meta- narratives of the respondents. What is important is that the data constructed in doing this thesis gives only the perception of the respondents' in relation to the script of learning as they experience them as learners from overseas. That means, when the respondents encounter difference in their host university, they perceive them in a particular manner. And references to cultural script for learning in the Institute of Education, in this thesis are made sense through such perceptions of the experience of respondents' learning.

8.3.1: Keeping the Native Voice

The interaction with others for learning is considered very important by the learners when they are in an intercultural setting. Respondents' reflections on stories of interaction for learning address issues of identity, different versions of power and knowledge that are prominent in different cultures.

Reflections on their way of making sense of classroom interaction for learning Akihiro says that he feels "*comfortable*" about not speaking out in the classroom. Reasoning out the act of being quiet in the class he mentions that Japanese do not like confronting others and that they are self critical. In his terms "*That is how we are*". He further mentioned that they are used to listen to others rather than arguing. These descriptions imply that Japanese are not interested in making their thinking public by speaking. Vocal thinking, according to Japanese culture, seems to be insignificant in constructing knowledge. It implies that knowledge construction for Japanese is a single act rather than an out come of active human interaction.

Similarly to Akihiro's meta-narrative, Sheng-Yu was restorying the Chinese way of interacting inside the classroom for learning. In his terms, Chinese are self critical and this quality has been transferred to the teaching learning situations. He thus says that Chinese teachers and learners do not think critical discussions are necessary for learning. This reflection helped me to rethink what some of the literature note about Chinese learners. For instance, interpersonal communication in the Chinese classroom has been referred to as a dialectic model of learning or traditional learning which tends to be "fragmented, linear, competition oriented and authority centered" (Holms, 2004). On the contrary, while revisiting Sheng-Yu's story, I felt that Chinese learners are more ethics oriented and that the communication between the teacher and the student is based on spiritual relationship rather than "authority". And their learning can not easily be labeled as "fragmented" since they are self critical and hence they should be critically reviewing their own learning process even though they are not vocally critical. The awareness of one's own learning process itself is a high level of cognitive skill (Saljo, 1979, in Beers, 1998). Hence, their learning can not necessarily be linear. Therefore, these

differences should be used to understand the different meanings given by the Chinese society, for the process of knowledge construction and power and authority in learning. Do they articulate the same meaning as they do in other societies? If not, can researchers coming from different cultures, with different cultural scripts for being learners, easily put the Chinese learner (or any other learner) in categories in terms of dominant stories of learning in Western societies?

Another aspect of learner positioning in terms of interaction for learning was highlighted by Roger's meta-narratives. In his point of view, knowledge construction does not necessarily stem from critical argument with the teacher. Of course he agrees that constructive criticism results in constructing knowledge. He seems to prefer to argue with one's own self or with the peers rather than critically engaging in arguing with the teacher. He points out that learners "need to be polite" and according to him, arguing with the teacher is against the set code of ethics of the learner.

In the meantime, some other meta-narratives of respondents suggest that they change their cultural script for learning merely for the survival of the difference they encounter in the context of an intercultural learning.

8.3.2: Doing What Romans Do

This section discusses how learner reflections shed light on two main issues related to the process of surviving the difference in an intercultural pedagogic encounter. First, the strategic change of learners' cultural scripts to survive the difference in the cultural scripts they encounter in the Institute of Education. Second, changing of the learners' cultural scripts for being learners for the purpose of addressing the power issues embedded in the process of learning, in an intercultural context. I start the discussion with the reflection on strategic changing of cultural scripts for survival.

Describing the surprising experience of learning in an overseas university, Saman from Sri Lanka, was telling me his way of surviving this surprise.

Saman: “... *I tried to adapt with the surprise. ...not to all. For which is important for me to survive here as a student and as a human being. ... we need to do what Romans do while in Rome... not a life long change...just for the time being...*” (interview; Saman, 29.09.04).

Saman seems to employ strategic adjustment for the purpose of surviving and accommodating the differences in an intercultural learning experience. As he notes, it is a change “*for the time being*”. Changing learner identities just for surviving the difference they experience in the host learning culture leads to serious issue of the impact of overseas higher education on overseas learners. Does accepting new narratives for the time being means that the learners go back to their native countries to live the old stories of learning? I was reflecting on Jehng, Johnson and Anderson (1993) and questioning whether beliefs about learning evolve with the exposure

to advanced education as they conclude. And if they do, can it practically change the learner narratives of learning in a significant manner?

While Saman tries changing strategically for surviving the difference, some other learners try to change their narratives according to the dominant stories about learning in the host pedagogic environment, owing to other reasons.

8.3.3: Acting as Someone Else

According to Pat's view, Black students prefer keeping silent in the native classrooms in South Africa as well as in a classroom overseas. However, Pat herself seems to have changed her cultural script for interaction with the intention of achieving a particular purpose, apart from constructing knowledge.

Pat: *"... to prove ourselves to these people. Because these people always look down upon the learners who come from non Western countries... we need to tell them we have something important to*

tell ... the British think what can we learn from Africans? Indians? We know... We know... We have the responsibility to represent our country to say that our country has something wealthy to say” (interview; Pat, 18.10.04).

Pat’s meta-narrative opened novel ways of looking at the process of learning in an intercultural context. Here, the normally reserved Black student has become vocally active in classroom interactions to address the power issues she encountered in interactions for learning. She seems to make use of classroom interactions to highlight the ability of their culture to contribute significantly in the process of knowledge construction.

She further seems to challenge the notion of interactive critical learning situations which are said to exist in Western cultures. She implies that giving prominence to dominant stories in the host culture portrays reappearance of the political powers British held in the past in terms of intellectual hegemony. She extends this view to suggest that the flow of knowledge is often a linear process, from the West to the rest of the world. Her rejection of this West to Rest

flow of knowledge is articulated through changing her quiet self to a vocally active learner during the lessons. Changing thus, she seems to adjust her learner identity to face the challenges in the new pedagogic situation. Here the process of identity changing seems stronger, since her change involves a particular purpose.

This switching over of identity leads to issues worth reflecting in the present context of intercultural higher education. On the one hand it invites us to question the ownership of knowledge in an intercultural pedagogic encounter thus, highlighting power issues embedded in learning. How and where do the learners from the rest of the world position themselves in interactions for learning in a British university? Whose voice is more prominent? On the other hand there are occasions when learners change narratives of learning not as a result of appreciating the host learning culture but as a means of challenging the new pedagogic culture. That means new meanings of constructing knowledge can some times occur as a result of clashing two different cultural scripts for learning.

At the same time, it emerged that some respondents are standing outside their wider cultural script for learning to emphasize a domain specific script for learning.

8.3.4: Standing Outside One's Own Bigger Picture

This discussion highlights that on some occasions, the reflections of some respondents' seem to position themselves, in terms of cultural scripts for learning, relating them to specific knowledge domains.

Kengi: *"...my experience is that all my lecturers were lecturing and we were listening..."*

"...back home, when they are doing gender, they are very critical... all the things we read about the Western issues, my students are very critical. Gender is something which you do not accept as given...They are not talking about things as they are given, when it is gender. I see a lot of healthy discussion in gender classes back home"

“...I am in a very empowering profession and people treat me with difference” (interview; Kengi, 07.06.05).

Thus, Kengi differentiates the kind of actions and interactions that takes place in teaching-learning contexts, in relation to the domain of gender, in her culture. Being a university teacher of gender issues in her culture seems to be considered an empowering area of pedagogy. And this particular quality, according to her meta-narrative, seems to shape the way the learners make sense of the process of learning. That means it is this empowering subject area, which helps learners to actively construct knowledge. At the same time, she suggests that other areas of knowledge do not share the same cultural script for learning in her own culture. Through this comparison, she implies that different domains of knowledge, within the same culture can have different cultural scripts for going about learning.

Further, critically questioning the cultural script for learning she experiences in the host culture, she suggests that this pedagogic encounter does not advocate healthy, critical intellectual arguments

during learning situations. Reflecting on the interview conversation with her I feel the voice of authority and power embedded in her voice. It seems as if she is able to adopt a helicopter view about her experience of learning in this overseas university.

Contrary to Kenji's reflections, John the TESOL teacher educator from Kenya reflects on this intercultural experience in a different manner. According to him, arguing with the teacher is not very welcome in their culture, and the learner remains a listener for most of the time. Even the teacher educators, according to him, are not given the exposure to critical pedagogy. Moreover, he describes that the distance between the teacher and the learner strengthen the culture of silence, whereas Kenji finds the teachers of Gender maintaining close helpful relationships for learning. Interestingly, John generalizes that the learners from European countries tend to engage more in classroom interactions while Kengi assumes that their culture of learning is more interactive and critical. Here, two respondents from the same culture interpret the new pedagogic experience in two different ways.

This epitomizes that there are domain specific scripts for learning, which articulate different stories within the same culture. Such differences intensify the intricacy embodied in narratives of cultural scripts for learning. This further reminds us that treating cultures according to geographical boundaries does not make sense in understanding cultural scripts for learning. Thus, the academics in intercultural higher education Institutions can not expect learners from the same geographical area to narrate similar stories of learning. For instance Kenji and John articulate different versions of construction of knowledge, power and authority they experience in the same intercultural pedagogic environment. This highlights the complicated quality of reading different cultural scripts for learning in an intercultural pedagogic situation.

8.4: Learner Positioning When Cultural Scripts Encounter Institutional Stories

Which follows is a discussion on respondents' reflections on the institutional script for learning they encounter in the Institute of Education, and its impact on learners' experience of learning.

8.4.1: Stories They Tell and Stories They Live

This discussion explains the issues which emerged in relation to learners positioning in terms of the pedagogic stories narrated by the Institution of Education.

I start with Yasin. Reflecting on the kind of academic writing advocated by the Institution she referred to two significant aspects; the kind of power attached to English language and the intellectual power owned by the Western Universities. Thus she mentioned that while learning in a British university, the learners from all over the world need to write in English which is the mother tongue of the English people.

Yasin; *“...Because they have written a lot, done lot of research, they have the authority in writing. Every thing is in their point of view...”* (interview; Yasin, 21.02.05).

According to her views, these institutions can decide how learners' should go about learning owing to the intellectual hegemony they hold in the world education market. Her argument is that since most of the research is being done in these Western universities they monopolies the way of constructing knowledge thus, prescribing the kind of writing academics should follow. Her reflections shed new light on looking at the experience of learning in a British university. Further adding she said that the idea of the liberal learner in these Western universities is just an illusion and that the learners are engaged in passive learning as prescribed by the Institution. Thus, coming from Taiwan, where the education system is normally described as "traditional" with a "surface" approach to learning (Holms, 2004), she says that this British way of going about learning in higher education leaves no space for the learners to be creative.

This meta-narrative provides clues to look at the experience of learning in this Institution in a novel manner. First, Yasin seems to challenge the dominant stories about the so called dialogic nature of teaching and learning in Western universities. Second, challenging thus, she left me with the question whether the acceptance of

dominant stories about learning are influenced by the power and authority the institutions hold in relation to constructing knowledge to the world or is it something else? Who owns the power to set rules for the “better” way of constructing knowledge? Do these Western institutions of Education describe the learners why the way “they” do it is better? If not, there is a gap between what the institutions wants the overseas learners to do and what the learners themselves actually do in learning.

Going back to Yasin, I found her addressing aspects of learner identity through her reflections on the institutional authority over learners’ process of learning. On the one hand, she seems to challenge and reject the Asian learner identity as dialectic. On the other hand, she implies that these British institutions promote passive identities for learners irrespective of the stories of interactive learning processes they narrate to the world. This obviously is an interesting reflection, which suggests that learners from overseas sometimes not only challenge the dominant institutional scripts for learning but also interpret them in novel way thus, questioning the given identities to learners from certain parts of the world as passive or active (Ryan, 2000).

Yasin's reflection seems to have resonance with Anita's meta-narrative on the kind of interaction the teachers have with the learners in the Institution. In her view, the so called informal, friendly interactive teacher does not exist in classroom teaching learning situations. Describing the teacher role, Anita says that they "*play the trick of being informal*" while acting formally thus resembling the formal teacher she has seen in Italy. Like Yasin, Anita from Italy, seems to question the dominant stories about the Western teacher produced by Western institutions. The stories institutions tell about the interactive teachers, who facilitate the learning process of the learners, do not apply regarding her experience in this institution. Anita suggests that there are alternative stories to the dominant, accepted stories institutions tell. She seems to suggest the distinction between the stories the institutions tell and the stories they live.

Reflecting on the institutional script for learning, some other respondents think that their capacity as learners in higher education is being humiliated by certain institutional codes of conduct. For instance, Oliver, the school inspector from Malawi was reflecting on the prescription he received for writing the qualifying essay that

was required to get qualified to enroll on a course in the Institute of Education. His view was that providing minute details of writing an essay reflects the image the British institutions have about learners overseas. In his terms, it is suggestive of the institutional view that overseas learners are not capable of writing even a simple essay without help. This makes him feel degraded as a learner. Moreover, he added that this is the way “they” teach us “their” way of writing.

This reflection seems to articulate the debate between “them” and “us”; the West and the Rest in the process of constructing knowledge. He seems to suggest that the institutions represent and promote the knowledge monopoly held by certain parts of the world. And thus, seems to wonder as to whose way of writing and constructing knowledge is better and why?

Another interesting aspect about learner identity in terms of institutional learning was raised by Lee, the student from Hong-Kong.

Lee: *“...I do not like to see the students to be institutionalized. I do not think me to be a totally different person or called a person with “Masters” after a few months time. What is a Master’s degree? What difference can it do to you?”* (Interview; Lee, 11.01.05).

Here, Lee is questioning the validity of institutional learning. In his view, a one year course in an overseas land can not bring much change to learners’ identity. Before expressing these he was challenging the learner centered quality of this institution where the learner can be “failed” by the teacher through their assessment on the written assignment. Of course, at the outset, he was telling me that he feels much more liberated as a learner in this Institution. Nevertheless, he was also reflecting on the idea of liberal learner in terms of institutional scripts of going about with learners. It seems that in Lee’s view, institutional learning does not necessarily bring about a change in the learner identity.

The discussion above sheds light on the learners’ concerns regarding the notions of power, identity and knowledge in an encounter of a context of intercultural learning. I now move on to

talk about these reflections in a more specific manner, considering them as issues which illuminate the cultural scripts of being learners in a context of intercultural learning.

8.5: Illuminating Issues: Identity, Power and Knowledge

This articulates the significant issues that emerged through the meta-narratives of the respondents, which I have explained above. These issues seem to illuminate the major themes in relation to cultural scripts in a context of intercultural learning. The illuminating issues that emerged through the meta-narratives seem to address three important aspects related to the experience of learning in an intercultural context. First, identity issues significant in learning in an intercultural setting. Second, they address the role played by multiple aspects of power when the learning situation is intercultural. Third, these meta-narratives throw light on varying understandings of the notion of knowledge in different cultures. Which follows is a discussion on these three major themes and their significance in a context of intercultural learning. I begin the discussion with the identity issue.

8.5.1: Identity issues in Intercultural Context of Learning

This section describes the impact of intercultural learning experience on learner identities as they have emerged from the meta-narratives of the respondents. Starting the discussion I brief my choice of the notion of identity as it has been employed in this thesis.

Identity as Narrative Rendering of Self

Identity, according to Hoffman (1998: 324), has become the “*bread and butter of educational diet-an everybody help yourself*” construct. Before doing this particular chapter I read different perspectives of “identity”, to form my view of “identity”, which would match my ontological and epistemological stance of doing this inquiry. Exploring definitions of identity is not my focus here. Nevertheless, I wanted to highlight that my view on identity in this thesis resulted from a critical engagement with the existing views on human identity and self.

Among the vast number of definitions of identity, I found two views which address my focus of identity. First, the culturalist view, which places an asocial emphasis on cultural logics. Second, the constructivist view which emphasizes the calculus of social position by actors on identity and self (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain, 1998). In my view, human identities are a fusion of figured worlds as well as socially constructed worlds. And I came across some views on identity that are in harmony with my ontology and epistemology in doing this thesis. For instance, Gee (2001:111) notes that human beings through time, in a certain order, gain specific experiences within specific discourses. This trajectory as well as one's own narrativization of it constitutes the "core identity" which is continuously under construction. Here, Gee considers that identity is being constructed as an activity of human communication, and this is suggested through the idea of narrativization. In the meantime, it embodies the socially developed nature of identity, which is always in the process of being formed rather than God given.

Similarly to the view of Gee (2001), Sfard and Prusak, (2005), hold that people tell others as well as themselves who they are and try to

act according to this self narrative about themselves. These self understandings refer to human identities according to these writers. Thus they propose the narrative aspect of identity construction.

I found that both these definitions harmonize with the constructivist view that identity is collectively shaped in human interaction and action. This view further encapsulates the capacity of addressing agency, which is relevant in identity building in the process of learning. Reflecting on the self narrative aspect of identity formation, I chose the meaning that identities are the narratives people tell of themselves and others of themselves. This meaning has been highlighted by Sfard and Prusak (2005). According to them, narratives that constitute one's identity become an important factor in shaping one's actions. Thus, I begin the next section of the discussion with this narrative view of human identity, and argue that the experience in learning in a context of intercultural learning embodies issues of learner identities.

Varving Versions of Learner Self

This section argues that respondents' meta-narratives about their cultural scripts for learning address varying aspects of learner identities or narrative renderings of the self. As my data portrays, these meta-narratives articulate identity issue highlighting the following five main aspects.

(1) Clinging to Old Narratives of self

Starting this discussion I remind the readers that in this discussion, I refer to the individual respondents using the countries where they come from. This is only because I have no better alternative to refer to respondents so that my reader can easily recognize them.

Having that said, I begin the argument that some respondents seem to cling into their old ways of going about their learner identities irrespective of encountering a new and different context of learning. I found that respondents from Taiwan, Italy, Japan, Hong-Kong, Fiji, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka, Maldives and China seem to prefer telling and appreciating their own self narratives as learners. Their stories

of learning epitomized their reluctance to reinterpret narratives for being learners to match the new stories, encountered in the new pedagogic situation. The respondents from Italy and Taiwan seem strongly rejecting the new stories of learning told by the Institute of Education. Stories of Sheng-Yu from China and Lee from Hong-Kong seem very complex since they were trying to reinterpret their narratives of learning, while clinging into their own self narratives as learners. This complexity is suggested through their contradicting views about the two kinds of narratives; their native narratives of learning and new narratives encountered in the British university. Some others seem to have forced themselves to finish the modules and go “back” to their former narratives of learning. This forcing of self into a new pedagogic situation as well as complex meandering between the native stories of learning and the dominant stories both can bring about tensions and frustration in the learners.

(2) Accepting New Narratives for Survival

This discussion highlights that there are learners who seem to accommodate to the new narratives of learning only for surviving

the new pedagogic situation, which differs from their own narratives of going about as learners.

For instance learners from Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Maldives, Malaysia and Mexico seem to accept the new narratives of learning for surviving in the new learning environment. Saman, from Sri Lanka describes the process of adjusting to the new academic culture as a kind of “*doing what Romans do*” (interview; Saman, 29.09.04). What is noteworthy is that they do not need to do like Romans do once they go back home. This amounts to the question whether some learners continue to tell the old tales about learning once they finish a particular course overseas? And if so, what kind of learning does it portray? How can learners accept a new set of stories just to survive a new pedagogy, while living with old stories, which are closer and familiar to them?

While some learners accept new stories for survival, some others seem to cover up their native learner selves to survive the new pedagogic culture. Which follows is a discussion of such reflections on identities.

(3) Suppressing Native Narratives of being Learners

Some of the meta-narratives told by the respondents imply that some learners suppress their native stories of being learners. Such learners seem to show that they narrate the dominant stories about learning in the new pedagogic situation. Learners from Pakistan, Kenya, Maldives and Ghana seem thus suppressing their native narratives for learning. For instance, Rifka from Pakistan told me that she is more a Western learner than a Pakistani. Interestingly, during our interview conversation she began to unfold her Pakistani learner self, unmasking herself as a “Western” learner quite authentically. This suggests the complexity of suppressing the native identity to mask one’s self with new learner identities. These respondents opened me new panoramas of reflecting on learner identities in terms of intercultural contexts of higher education. Why do learners from overseas try to cover up their old identities as learners when they encounter the intercultural learning situation? Why is it difficult for them to continue with their covering up? What kinds of tensions and frustrations do learners experience in this process of covering up identities, while living with the identities they try to cover up?

Apart from covering up, there are instances when learners begin to feel their old narratives being disempowered by the new learning experience. The following discussion highlights such reflections.

(4) Feeling Disempowered by the Dominant Narratives

The students from Malawi, Taiwan, Jamaica, Brazil and France, who have professional experience in the field of education, seem to say that the code of conduct in the new pedagogic situation disempowered them, and their old narratives of learning in higher education. Nevertheless, some, like Oliver from Malawi, Fay from Jamaica, and Seema from Brazil seem to have been in the process of telling themselves new stories of learning while feeling disempowered. Contrary to them, Yasin from Taiwan and Magi from France seem to be rejecting to appreciate the new stories for learning. Sometimes I wondered whether some learners feel that adapting new stories of learning contributes to losing their status.

This attitude of disempowering can not be ignored in an intercultural learning situation, since it invites the learners to

question who they are and what they are in an overseas pedagogic encounter. This situation also motivates someone to question how intercultural pedagogic situations can enrich narratives, which are constructed by overseas learners, through positive attitudes.

Finally, I notice that respondents' reflections are not devoid of desires to reinterpret their old narratives of learning and I explain these reflections next.

(5) Reinterpreting Narratives of Learner Selves

This section describes that there are respondents, who are willing to reflect and reinterpret their narratives of learning, while confronting a new learning situation.

For instance, learners from Uganda, Cyprus and Nigeria seem to have started reinterpreting their narratives of learning after encountering the new pedagogic situation. There are some others, who seem to have the desire to reinterpret their narratives of

learning, according to the dominant narratives of identity in the Institute of Education. Nevertheless, these respondents do not seem to be readily embracing the narratives in the new learning encounter, since they still hold on to one of the narratives I have discussed above, in relation to their learner identities. For instance, Sheng-Yu, the Chinese learner, while clinging in to his old narratives of learning seems to appreciate some stories encountered in the new learning situation. And Saman, from Sri Lanka, whose narrative shift is basically for survival, nevertheless, admires some of the new stories for learning. Similarly, Seema, while talking about the disempowering tales told by the Institution shows her desire to change some of her tales of learning as they are told by the new pedagogic encounter.

Likewise, the above discussion suggests the impact of intercultural learning experience on learner identities. It tells two important issues regarding learner identity in a context of intercultural learning. First, learners with different cultural scripts for learning can not be expected to embrace the stories of the new learning experience without much effort. Second, often the overseas learners live in between the native narratives and the novel narratives told in the

new learning experience. Therefore, an intercultural pedagogic situation would comprise diverse versions of being learners. What is worth considering is that if the intercultural teaching-learning situations do not understand the possibility of multiple learner identities, it can influence the learning process, sometimes in a negative manner. Especially, the Western institutional script for treating all the learners as equals, which contributes to the notion of totalizing of culture can often ignore these different learner identities (Abreu, 2005). This leads to intensify the invisible tensions and confusions experienced by the learners as well as the teachers who expect the learners from elsewhere to begin telling the dominant stories of their institutional pedagogic culture, after a short course on academic literacy.

Nevertheless, one may argue that confusions and tensions in relation to identity are common characteristics of any learning process. The counter argument is that learners from overseas come for a short period of time, and as some respondents mention, by the time they understand the dominant narratives of learning, the course has finished and it is time for them to go back. Moreover, the international students are paying a considerable amount of money

for the purpose of understanding the new narratives of the new pedagogic situation. Therefore, it is not surprising that they question whether the money and time they spend is worth the tension and frustration that is disarticulated by the host culture of learning.

Therefore, learner identities in intercultural learning seem a significant issue to address. On the one hand, it influences the process of teaching -learning. On the other hand, it questions the place of the overseas learner in the wealthy business of international higher education, which is blooming in some Western countries.

Apart from learner identities, the respondents' meta-narratives articulate different versions of the nature of knowledge held by different cultures, and their impact on the process of learning. Starting this argument, I brief the diverse meanings given to the notion of knowledge, and the nature of knowledge as it is discussed in literature.

8.5.2: Nature of Knowledge and Intercultural Context of Learning

This section highlights that respondents' reflections implied different versions of the nature of knowledge, which seem to influence the individual learners' process of learning.

Equipping students with knowledge is one of the focal functions of education and, recent research has furnished productive ways of understanding the notion of knowledge (Jehng et al. 1993). My attempt at understanding these different views of knowledge suggested me that there are two major ways of viewing epistemology as discussed in literature. They are the constructivist views and the empiricist views of epistemology. In my view, these two aspects have been identified and conceptualized under various themes and categories by different researchers.

To start with, I look at Perry (1968 in Schommer, 1998 and in Beers, 1988). He has theorized different epistemological beliefs based on his research with Harvard undergraduates. As Beers

(1988) notes Perry has found that the students' views about knowledge vary in a predictable way with their exposure to diverse views of knowledge inside and outside the classroom. Perry describes the development of cognition through nine stages beginning from believing in absolute truths to multiple versions of truth. According to him, once the learner reaches the stage of understanding multiple versions, the learner is then able to develop into making choices from different versions to match particular contexts. Thus, Perry seems to explain a view of the notion of knowledge, which develops into several stages.

Studying epistemological beliefs with a new perspective Schommer, (1998) reconceptualised epistemological beliefs as multiple. And recognizes that students' beliefs about knowledge are not necessarily consistent levels of sophistication with one another. Studying 418 adults from all walks of life Schommer suggests four epistemological continuums. These four includes beliefs in fixed ability, (ranging from ability to learn is fixed to its changeability), simple knowledge (ranging from knowledge is unambiguous bits to highly interrelated concepts), quick learning (ranging from learning is quick to not at-all to learning is gradual), and certain knowledge

(ranging from knowledge is absolute to knowledge is evolving). Schommer implies that learners believing in simple knowledge had poor comprehension and monitoring in complex texts such as mathematics, while learners believing in quick learning had poor comprehension in monitoring in social sciences.

Jehng, et al. (1993), researching university students' epistemological beliefs as a function of their educational level and field of study have adapted Schommer's (1990) framework for epistemological beliefs. Their adopted framework consists of five factors; certainty of knowledge, omniscient authority, orderly process, innate ability and quick learning. They conclude that the students from "soft" fields such as arts and humanities believe that knowledge is uncertain and that knowledge is not an orderly process whereas the students from "hard" fields such as engineering believe the opposite. Thus they imply that student' beliefs about epistemology is a product of activity, the culture and the context in which they are cultivated.

Tsai, (1998) studying the interaction between scientific epistemological beliefs and learning orientations in a group of Taiwanese eighth graders suggest that the students basically have two orientations regarding scientific epistemological beliefs (SEB). Accordingly, the learners have constructivist epistemological beliefs and empiricist beliefs. Tsai mentions that students with constructivist beliefs tend to engage in active, meaningful learning. They, believing in alternative conception of pedagogy, show capability in monitoring their own learning and seem to have secondary level cognition or metacognition (Kitchner, 1983, in Tsai, 1998). On the contrary, the students with empiricist beliefs tend to engage in more problem solving practices, focusing on learning out come. According to Tsai, these students belong to the first level of cognitive processing, which is called cognition. Hence, these learners involve more in rote learning, memorizing and believing that science has no application in day today life. Therefore, Tsai proposes to encourage constructivist orientations toward learning science.

Thus, it is evident that there are diverse versions of the nature of knowledge, depending on students' beliefs about knowledge. In my

study, I found the respondents articulating their versions of epistemology through their meta-narratives of the experience of learning. Which follows is a discussion on respondents' major orientations toward knowledge, as they emerged through their reflections.

Different Versions of Knowledge in Different Cultures

In this section I argue that there are different versions of knowledge in different cultures as they are articulated by the respondents. I identify these differences in terms of three major orientations of knowledge; knowledge as constructed, knowledge as transmitted by authorities, and as a process lying somewhere between constructivist version and knowledge as transmitted or as mixed versions. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that these versions do not apply as static categories that describe learners' orientations toward knowledge construction. Instead, I identified them overlapping with each other making the division confusing.

Let us begin with the version of knowledge as transmitted through authorities.

(1) *The Truth*

Some learners view knowledge as transmitted by authorities; the teachers and experts. According to the meta-narratives of the respondents, this is the most commonly implied version of knowledge. A vast majority of respondents seem to have come to the institute from cultures, where knowledge is considered as “the” truth that should be delivered by the experts to the novice. Hence, their narratives about leaning comprise very simple events such as listening, reading, memorizing and reproducing. For instance, respondents from Sri Lanka, Maldives, Italy, France, Taiwan, Nigeria, Jamaica and many others seem to consider knowledge as accurate heap of facts to be reproduced. Hence, they think that engaging in practicing more problem solving activities, listening well, reading books for authors’ point of view, getting the best grades by reproducing teachers’ notes at the examinations as their responsibilities as learners. They further seem to be very conscious about not making errors, since knowledge is about one particular

truth. They do not seem to have confidence in talking about alternative forms of knowledge.

Lack of confidence and confusion the respondents seem to experience in understanding alternative versions of epistemologies can lead to difficulties for learning as well as for interactions for learning. Especially when they find that they are not spoon fed by the teachers they either get tense in trying to adjust to the alternative notion of knowledge or get frustrated over the new versions of knowledge. For instance, Yasin who strongly rejects the alternative forms of knowledge she encounters in the Institute seems quite tense since she finds it difficult to survive the new learning environment with her own version of knowledge. Such situations urge us to question where do learners belong in an intercultural pedagogic environment, when they do not share the meanings of the notion of knowledge of the host learning culture? Why do some learners reject the host institutions' versions of epistemology? Are Intercultural educational institutions aware of the predicament of learners like Yasin?

The above discussion highlights that learners in intercultural learning contexts believe in different versions of knowledge, and in my study the majority of them believe that knowledge means reproduction of the truth. Some others believe that knowledge as constructed and I discuss how these respondents make sense of the word knowledge.

(2) Multiple Truths

This discussion highlights the constructivist version of knowledge as has been suggested by respondents.

A few respondents seem to have constructivist orientations toward learning. For instance learners from Brazil, Bulgaria, Kenya and Fiji seem to view knowledge production as an active process, which requires meta-cognitive skills. Hence, they seem to engage in active participation in understanding alternative versions of truths and making their choices of opinion from different versions of truth. In the meantime, they imply that

construction of knowledge occurs in human interactions and knowledge is not given by authorities.

The learners believing in this version of knowledge seem to adjust to the new pedagogic situation with less tensions and confusions. This does not mean that they do not face difficulties in the encounter of a new learning situation. For instance, Seema from Brazil, who believes in active interaction for learning, feels disappointed about the unwelcoming quality of some teachers in the institution in relation to their interactions with students. In such cases the question is who are more constructivist; the learners from other cultures or the Western institutions of education? Such stories tell us that mere sharing of similar versions of knowledge it self does not bring about harmony between the learners' narratives of learning and the dominant stories of learning narrated by the host learning environment. Subtle controversy regarding many issues in terms of the experience of learning exists amidst the similarities. One may simplify this situation and say that intercultural learning experience can not be devoid of multifaceted complications and confusions.

Thus, this discussion implies that some learners, while narrating constructivist versions of epistemology still continue to encounter different stories of learning in the new pedagogic situations. Next I highlight that some learners seem to narrate a mixed version of knowledge; knowledge as constructed and knowledge as transmitted.

(3) Mixed Versions of Knowledge

Reflections of some respondents suggest that their versions of knowledge lie in between the two versions of knowledge; knowledge as given and the constructivist view of knowledge. Hence, I call this, the mixed version of epistemology.

These mixed versions seem to result in complicating the learner identities in an intercultural pedagogic situation. For instance, Pamela from Finland, who seems to believe in more constructivist views of learning, finds it difficult to critically construct knowledge through what she reads and writes. Instead, she accepts the authors' point of view as given knowledge, without critiquing and quotes

writers without critically reviewing the significance of the quotations.

Pamela: “... *students are very much the same like here... we learn in groups...keep learning diaries...*”

“...*we are not critical in writing*” (interview; Pamela, 25.06.05).

This shows that even though they practice some constructivist ways of learning, constructivist ideas are not being employed in all the areas of learning. Similarly to Pamela, Sheng-Yu from China, Magi from France, Veronica from Austria, Roger from Ghana, and Marina from Mexico seem to belong to mixed version of knowledge.

Veronica: “... *back home, Learner is more liberal and they can question and argue with the teacher...*”

“...*I am not talking too much in the class...we have an approach similar to Ben’s approach in our country. But not popular. A young*

teacher had once tried to use it and there was much criticism about it...” (interview; Veronica, 07.05.05)

Here, Veronica seems to describe her mixed version of knowledge. While accepting that they have constructivist ways of going about learning, she explains how a particular teacher with constructivist ways of teaching was criticized by the rest of the staff. This implies that even though there is an acceptance of constructivist ways of teaching and learning, there are other ways of learning which are more popular in their culture.

This discussion suggests that intercultural pedagogic situations can encounter learners with mixed epistemological beliefs. The important aspect is that their constructivist orientations would overshadow the difficulties they face owing to their empiricist orientations. Thus, the academics may not easily understand that learners with mixed versions of epistemology encounter difficulties in reading a new pedagogic culture.

Thus, this discussion portrays that there are three main orientations of knowledge according to how learners, who come to intercultural learning contexts from different cultures make sense of the word knowledge. In the meantime, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, these emergent versions of knowledge can not be clearly compartmentalized into the three types I discussed above. Instead, they seem to overlap with each other. It further emerged that there is a possibility of these orientations getting changed during a particular pedagogic experience. Such changing orientations are discussed below.

(4) Changing Knowledge Orientations

It is interesting to note that learners with different orientations of epistemology have sometimes the tendency to change their orientations, while in the encounter of learning in an intercultural context of learning.

I adapted Schommer's (1990), framework of differentiating epistemological beliefs for the purpose of understanding the

changing nature which emerged through the meta-narratives of learners. The framework I used contains the following four aspects of knowledge. First, knowledge as absolute truths; knowledge which is more certain and fixed than tentative. This epitomizes the concrete view of knowledge. Respondents from Maldives, Italy, Taiwan and Pakistan seem to represent this epistemological orientation. And except for one, the other learners have more than three years of experience of learning in the Institute of Education, and it implies that they have not moved from their own version of knowledge while experiencing an intercultural pedagogic situation.

Second, knowledge as evolving. The learners, who seem to view knowledge as evolving, consider knowledge to be more tentative than certain. Hence, the process of learning is slow and irregular, as well as complex and more abstract. They seem to believe that knowledge is derived through reasoning. Respondents from Sri Lanka, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan and Jamaica seem to have shifted from their versions of knowledge as transmitted from authorities to the orientation that knowledge is evolving. Magi from France who seemed to have a mixed epistemological orientation in her native learning experience has shifted to this particular belief. However,

they do not seem to be very much interested in questioning their view of knowledge as well as alternative views regarding knowledge.

Third, knowledge as multiple versions of reality. And learners with this orientation question the notion of absolute truth. They accept knowledge to be complex and constructed. Nevertheless, they still seek support of other sources such as teachers to construct knowledge without initiating it. The majority of the respondents seem to have shifted from their native versions of knowledge to this third version with their experience in learning in the Institute of Education. Thus, Jordan from Nigeria, Sheng-Yu from China, Fay from Jamaica, Rani from Mauritius and Akihiro from Japan have shifted from the version of absolute truth to the version of multiple truths. This intercultural learning encounter has shifted Veronica from Austria and Kenji from Kenya from mixed orientation of knowledge and John from Kenya, from knowledge as absolute to version of multiple truths.

Fourth, knowledge as making choices from alternatives. The respondents believing in this version seem to have higher cognitive skills such as meta-cognition. They show the potential of initiating the process of constructing knowledge without seeking help from teachers. Further, they seem to have the ability of making choices from different versions of truth to address their purpose according to their ontological stance regarding any particular issue.

Reflecting on the above versions of knowledge as they emerged from the meta-narratives of the respondents', I felt that they articulate some themes noteworthy in relation to intercultural contexts of higher education. Which follows is a brief description of such themes.

Themes Stemming from Varying Versions of Epistemology

Different versions of epistemology that emerged through meta-narratives of respondents' shed light on several significant themes. Most significantly, these themes are multidimensional and overlap with each other. I encountered five noteworthy themes arising out of the above discussion. First, intercultural learning experiences do

not necessarily change learners own versions of epistemology. Hence, some begin to narrate different stories of learning with the intercultural learning while some do not. Second, learners with constructivist learning orientations seem to adapt easily to the version of making choices from alternatives, experiencing less confusion. Third, the majority of learners, who come from knowledge as transmitted orientation, seem to have shifted to multiple truths version, while only three of them seem to have reached the version of knowledge as making choices from alternatives. Fourth, those who remain in the absolute truth version seem to reject the version of epistemology advocated by the host institution, not responding to their learning environment. This rejection seems to have created tensions in terms of encountering a new pedagogy. Fifth, the learners, who have shifted into the epistemological version that knowledge is evolving, seem to live in between rejecting and accepting the new scripts for knowledge construction, they encounter in this overseas institution of learning.

Having described these, I highlight that these themes do not easily fall into any consistent level or a sophisticated pattern. For instance, I do not find them describing a simple, linear, one dimensional

pattern, which evolves methodically from the stage of absolute truths to the level of multiple choices. Hence, one would find these themes not in resonance with the one dimensional model proposed by Perry (1970, in Beers, 1998) or the model which differentiate epistemological beliefs between “soft” fields and “hard” fields (Jehng, et al., 1993). What I find is that within one particular field itself there are different versions of epistemology. In the meantime, I could not find any pattern that proves the stereotyped versions of the ‘Asian’ and ‘Western’ learners. I was thinking how far the “reproductive orientation” Dunbar proposes to generalize the “Asian” learner can be applied to those who come from Asia, and those who belong to different other parts of the world (Dunbar in Kember and Gow, 1991). Contrary to these stereotyped versions, learners coming from different versions of epistemology seem to move into other different versions, during different stages in their process of learning, irrespective of their geographical boundaries as Asians or Europeans.

I next move on to explain the emergence of the issue of power and different interpretations of power issue in relation to learning, when

learners encounter intercultural contexts of learning at Post Graduate level.

8.5.3: Different Versions of Power and Intercultural Contexts of Learning

This section focuses on how respondents address power issues they encounter in intercultural pedagogic situations. I begin this discussion with a very brief explanation of the notion of power, as it is employed in this thesis. And then, the power issues that emerged from the meta narratives of the respondents will be addressed under three major themes; power issues in relation to teacher-student interactions, power issues and medium of instruction intercultural contexts of learning and the authorship of knowledge, that is constructed in contexts of intercultural learning. Of course, these three themes overlapped with each other and therefore, these three themes should not be taken as a static way of categorization.

Power and Knowledge

The notion of power has been defined in different ways in literature. In this thesis, power is identified as the organized attempt to influence others intellectually, socially, economically or culturally. And more relevantly to this inquiry, I understand power as the organized attempts to influence others intellectually. Foucault (1980) talking about the issue of power mentions that power is co-extensive with the social body; that relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations such as production, family and kinship. In this thesis the emergent power relations between the teacher and the student as well as the institutions and the learners in relation to production of knowledge seems very significant. Moreover, Foucault notes that this interconnection between power and other social relations delineates general conditions of dominations which are then formed into a coherently unitary strategic form. What emerged from the meta-narratives of the respondents' is that the power relations embodied in the process of teaching and learning as well as the process of knowledge construction, transform themselves into organizational rules, norms and the ways of going about the activity of construction of

knowledge. These power relations seem to vary depending on different cultures.

Having discussed that, I move on to highlight how the issue of power makes sense in teacher-student relationship in certain cultures in the world. As it emerged from the reflections of the students, power issues in teacher-student relationships can be discussed in relation to two main areas; knowledge authority and moral authority. I begin this discussion with knowledge authority.

(1) Knowledge Authority: from Teacher to Learner

This section argues that some respondents' reflections on their experience of learning portray a kind of teacher-student relationship based on the authority of knowledge owned by the teachers. Marina from Mexico, Freeda from Cyprus, and Magi from France suggest that they respect the teacher for their expertise and the status brought about by their academic power.

Freeda; “...*Most of them think they are superior to us...have higher positions and ...important...I think they are experts and have to be respected and listen to*” (interview; Freeda, 15.02.05).

Freeda implies that the role of the teachers in their culture is treated with respect owing to their superiority in relation to the possession of knowledge. The notion of respect here seems to encapsulate power rather than emotional or moral considerations. This factor was highlighted when she compares and contrasts the kind of relationship between the teachers and the students during her fathers’ school days. According to her, in the past, the teachers were respected by the students as well as the community, owing to a moral kind of a bond. Contrary to that relationship, what she experiences at present, is a rapport that is given meaning in terms of the respect for knowledge the teachers are supposed to own.

Magi, talking about respecting teachers in her culture, mentioned that teachers’ academic knowledge gives them the kind of social recognition and status they gain from the students. At the same time, she highlights teachers are unapproachable due to their higher

status in relation to knowledge. Interestingly, she adds that the higher the social status of knowledge, the wider the gap between those, who said to have knowledge and those, who try to gain knowledge from them. On the one hand, her comment suggests that this gap is not vacuous. Instead, it encapsulates socio-cultural and economic power owned by one particular set of people in the society. And this power, within the Institution of Education, is named as “respect”. On the other hand, she implies that this gap creates a social and intellectual distance between the learners and the teachers. This distance seems to have lead to hierarchic, formal and authoritative relationship between the “intellectuals” and those who seek knowledge from them.

Likewise, it seems that the kind of distance between the teacher and the learner, harmonizes with the concept of social stratification. Another significant aspect of this relationship is that Freeda, Marina and Magi all mentioned that they do not appreciate this authority owned by their teachers, and I felt that Foucault’s view that there are no relations of power devoid of resistance is applicable in this kind of power relations. At the same time, the process of knowledge transmission from the more powerful knowledge authorities to the

powerless novice resembles any other kind of power relation in the society. The authority and the flow of power, embodied in the teacher-student relationship as described above, shows one way linear process; from powerful to the power-less. Significantly, the power-less student do not appreciate this kind of power relation between themselves and their teachers. Nevertheless, they seem just moving on with the available script for teacher-student relationship in their culture.

Contrary to the above described power relation, some of the respondents' reflections suggests a kind of teacher-student relationship which seems more complex. Power issues that emerge from these reflections imply a fusion of authority of knowledge expertise own by the teachers and spiritual-moral authority they hold. What follows is a discussion of such power issues.

(2) Life-long Teacher; Moral Authority

This section delineates a kind of power relation which exists between the teacher and the student that can be made sense through knowledge authority and spiritual or moral authority.

Respondents from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Hong-Kong, China, Mauritius, Malawi, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Fiji and Japan narrated this two-fold nature of their interaction with their teachers. For instance, Rani, from Mauritius says that teachers for them are like Gods and parents. Saman, from Sri Lanka believes that respect for teachers is there in their blood. In Lavina's view teachers in Fiji are equals to adults in the society and thus they are being respected. And Akihiro, talks about the place of the teacher in Japan as follows;

Akihiro: "...Teacher-pupil relation is very complex in our country. We respect them like adults with their power of knowledge and authority. They help us all the way through... we never consider

them as equals....They are very special in society” (Akihiro, 02.01.05).

Akihiro’s words succinctly sum up the kind of relationship between the teacher and the student. The juxtaposition of “*helping throughout*” and treating “*never as equals*” intensify the aspect of power and moral accountability attached to the role of the teacher. The distantly close teacher is very special as a community member and this again highlights that teacher’s role is not limited to any particular pedagogic situation. Instead, teachers hold the moral accountability of helping the society continuously, making use of their power of knowledge. The “power” attached to the teacher role as described by these respondents is more complicated than the “power” articulated by Marina or Magi. Interestingly, views of Foucault (1980) on power, that power often involves notions of domination and resistance do not apply in this kind of power relations. On the contrary, these respondents seem to willingly accept the moral and spiritual authority embedded in the “power” of the teacher role. If there is domination, that may be moral.

A similar kind of power and authority seems to embody the teacher-student relationship that is experienced in Sheng-Yu's culture.

Sheng-Yu: *"...We can not jut teach and go away ...In school, the parents say the teachers that if the students do not behave well, punish them. They can come to houses and talk to us... we discuss with them out of lecture hours, week ends. Always they regard me as a guide.*

"... I would not talk to them as if I am a friend. It is just spiritual"
(interview; Shang-Yu, 04.04.05).

According to Sheng-Yu, the role expectations of the role of the teacher in their culture seem to be complex. The role of the Teacher transcends the task of teaching within the school hours and moves on to guiding the life of the learner. As he mentioned in the interview, the teachers are the authorities in their society who are responsible for the future life of the learners. This implies the life-long responsibility of the teacher in some societies. It also highlights that the notion of authority does not give the same

meaning in different cultures in relation to teacher-student relationship. Here, the authority as well as the power the teachers enjoy stem from both their knowledge expertise as well as the moral or spiritual kind of bond they maintain with the learners and the society. Hence, the most important aspect here is that the teacher-student relationship, which seems to be based on moral respect and spiritual bond, can be interpreted as reciprocal.

The noteworthy aspect of this discussion is that it suggests the different ways of making sense of power and authority that encapsulate the relationship between the teacher and the student in different cultures. The implication is that there are multiple versions of the meaning of power in different cultures and that these versions are intertwined with several other stories of doing life in different cultures. And the most significant aspect is that only three respondents implied the meaning of authority and power in a simple manner, connoting the notions of domination, unaccepted hierarchy and resistance. The majority of the respondents treat “power” and “authority” related to the relationship between the teacher and the student in a complicated manner, accepting it with respect.

This suggests that learners who come to intercultural contexts of learning bring different versions power issues in relation to teacher-student relationship. Therefore, there is a possibility of overseas learners facing complications in reading the host pedagogic situations in relation to their meanings and practices of power issues in learning. Sometimes, they can misread the kind of teacher-student relationship they experience in the host university culture. And misunderstandings can inform how the learners go about learning as well as their rapport with the teachers for the purpose of learning. For instance, learners, who respect the teacher authority, do not easily get vocally critical in learning situations. This makes some learners different from the others. Consequently, some learners would get labeled according to the criteria of the “good learner” in the host learning culture.

Thus, the above discussion portrays how power is given different meanings in different cultures in relation to teacher-student relationship. From there I move on to say how learners in an intercultural learning situation depict the power issues encapsulated in the medium of instruction or the medium of teaching –learning.

(3) Language and Power

Power issues intertwined with the language used as the medium of instruction in intercultural contexts of learning emerged as another significant issue worth discussing. I frame the discussion on two major aspects that emerged in respondents' meta-narratives in relation to language issue. First, the contribution of language as the authority of constructing knowledge in intercultural contexts of learning. Second, the question of authorship and the ownership of the kind of knowledge that is constructed and transacted in English in British universities. My focus on the first issue will be two fold; power of language that exists in vocal contributions to knowledge construction and power of language that is embedded in written contributions to knowledge construction.

Their Knowledge in Their Language

This section portrays the power issues embedded in English language as the medium of teaching and learning in an intercultural context of learning.

John: *"...Being in Kenya I never understood English culture...in language there are new terms here. If you say 'excuse me' it is the word for apologizing. But here they say sorry and excuse me both."*

"...I was taken to be an expert in English back home. But now when I am told to do like this and that the language seems to turn the other way round. Now I feel I do not know any English...I found I do not know anything. What is happening here is not happening in the third world"

"... We are using their language to understand them. What if they happen to learn in our language? They are very fast and can not understand them...we have a different dialect. They never adjust their vocabulary even. This really hinders our progress in learning. They have this CAPLITS or whatever... Not very useful..."
(interview; John, 15.02.05).

John's views in relation to his experience of learning in English in this British university portray significant issues regarding power that encapsulates language for learning. First, he implies that English, the main tool of constructing knowledge in a British university does not mean only a set of phonemes in a particular

linguistic structure. Instead, English replicates the particular culture of whom and where it is being used. Second, he articulates the language gap between “here” and “there”; in England and in the third world. His reference to the ‘third world’ implies that language issues for learning are also economic and political as well as cultural. According to him, knowledge moves faster in the ‘developed’ parts of the world. And the vehicle of both constructing and transferring this knowledge is the producer’s own language; English. Therefore, on the one hand, the language gap between the British and the others, whose first language is not English, symbolizes the knowledge gap. On the other hand, it epitomizes the ability of language in empowering a particular part of the world in knowledge construction. Owing to this factor, language has the ability of disempowering learners from other cultures in terms of doing learning. This is evident when John says that this new experience of learning has convinced him that he knows nothing. While writing about this I was reminded of Yasin’s idea that learner centered education in British universities is an illusion. Moreover, John’s reference to “their” language seems to suggest a kind of linguistic alienation an overseas learner can experience in a British university. And one may add that linguistic alienation can result in

keeping an overseas learner aloof from active participation in the whole culture of learning, introduced by the host institution. Respondents like John seem to invite us to rethink the meaning of being knowledgeable in an intercultural pedagogic environment? What correlation is there between having mastery in English and being a knowledgeable person or otherwise?

Here, the effort the overseas learners have to make to use “their” language to understand “them” articulates the social and cultural nature of language as well as the process of learning. According to him, learning involves understanding the pedagogy as well as the people, who author this pedagogy, since they influence the curriculum and the assessment process for learning. Therefore, coming overseas for learning seems a more complex process than buying a pack of knowledge from the producers and going home after a few months time. The intricacy of this process is intensified by the medium of instruction and the cultural and political issues that embody the language through which the pedagogy is sold.

“Them” and “their” language further highlights that pedagogic stories narrated by English people in English are most prominent in intercultural learning situations. Then the question is what role does the significant pedagogic narratives of others who can not narrate them fluently in English play in a British university? Seema’s experience in the university seems to add to this question. Emphasizing the opportunities for participating in lessons she mentioned the following ideas.

Seema: *“When we talk with other international students I got to know that their voices are not heard and they are not happy and not feeling comfortable. And it is always the English talking”* (interview; Seema, 30.09.04).

These views seem to question the role of the learners from overseas in the process of liberal learning that is advocated in Western universities. How can learners be liberal when the language of learning provides the lead for a particular set of learners, who use English as their mother tongue? This may encourage one to ask the pragmatic aspect of all kinds of approaches to constructing

knowledge that are recognized as democratic and learner centered, when the medium of language through which knowledge is constructed can dominate learning. These experiences highlight the power of language in intercultural learning.

Interestingly, this power, according to some respondents, transcends mere linguistic power. For instance, Rifca, from Pakistan, referring to language issues in learning says;

Rifca: “... *We come here and learn the theories constructed by the West. Never question the bad aspects of them or applicability for us. Even if we want to speak... feel vulnerable... language problem... It is the Black and White debate. Their language, White being the Masters...the masters’ language...*” (Interview; Rifca, 26.01.05).

Here, she does not seem to refer to the linguistic aspect of language. Instead, she seems to consider language in a wider context; cultural, economic as well as political. In Rifca’s point of view, power issues

embedded in English language is not something inherited by the language itself. Instead, the significance of English language has been achieved through political agendas, put in to practice by the native users of English language, in the past as well as in the present. Hence, her argument quite intricately invites someone to question the worth and the applicability of the knowledge learners buy from these universities. Rifca thus, highlights the alleged power of knowledge that is constructed by the “Masters” using the language of the “Masters”, the Whites. This again refers to the kind of dependency of the other users of language on English as a language, when it comes to learning in intercultural contexts. One may interpret this situation as intellectual colonization that can occur in a learning context, where a particular language, with a particular political history, dominates the process of construction of knowledge.

Most significantly, Rifca seems to address the applicability of knowledge constructed by the Masters’ language in other countries. Does it echo that knowledge constructed in these universities is enforced on the other countries irrespective of its applicability? Do other countries buy the knowledge produced in these universities,

since they have the monopoly of the knowledge market and English language as Yaisn questions? Rifka, and John seem to address power issues in language in a very similar manner to that of Pat from South Africa, Lee from Hong-Kong and Yasin from Taiwan. According to them, the kind of authority hold by English language is symbolic of the intellectual hegemony enjoyed by Western universities.

Moving to another aspect of the language issue that emerged from the meta-narratives of the respondents, I discuss how they consider the activity of writing as a means of employing the power of English language in contexts of learning.

Writing in their Academic Writing

Important aspects related to academic writing that is advocated in this British university has been commented on in detail in chapter six. And it emerged that there are different cultural scripts for academic writing in different cultures. This discussion depicts how the meta-stories of the respondents articulate this difference in

terms of power issues that encapsulate English academic writing, they experience while learning in this British university.

One significant issue that emerged is that some respondents are not willing to accept the kind of academic writing advocated by the Institution. And some of them challenge as to why they need to follow the British academic writing once they have their own ways of writing. In such cases they always describe their way of writing for academic purposes as better and more applicable within their socio-cultural context. For instance, Yasin from Taiwan challenging the way of going about writing mentioned;

Yasin: *“At the beginning, I thought this is a better way. But now it is not better. Because they have written a lot in English and done many research they have the authority for writing, saying things. Everything is in their point of view. ...Not apt for me... maybe for English context”* (interview; Yasin 21.02.05).

These lines quite eloquently sum up the power issues described by the respondents in relation to English academic writing. According to her, the authority the British people have over the process of knowledge construction owing to English language and research, seem to echo in their way of academic writing. This strongly implies the economic and political issues related to learning in British Universities. Moreover, describing a particular program in the Institution which is meant to support the overseas learners in English language, Magi from France told me that it is just a mechanical way of teaching another language. She told me that once she questioned why they should write in the way the English write and the answer has been that the students have to do so, since that is what 'they' do here. This particular answer seems to embody the authority as well the monopoly held by the institutions in the education market. There is no description as to why the learners need to follow this kind of academic writing. It seems as if they sell their products without paying attention to the views of the customers. I felt that what Mitchell and Weiler (1991) hold in relation to the functions of educational Institutions resonate with the views of these respondents. They write:

“ ... Institutions of Higher learning can not be viewed ...as instructional sites; ... defined as ...agencies engaged in specific forms of moral and political regulation. ...they produce knowledge...offer students with a sense of place, worth and identity...ways ...and presuppose particular histories and being in the world” (Mitchell and Weiler, 1991: introduction)

Thus they highlight that educational institutions and the process they are engaged in are not innocent, and I find that some respondents have articulated this issue in responding to certain practices advocated by the Institute of Education. The mostly criticized among them, is academic writing.

Considering the issues of power, it seems that some of the respondents are not readily embracing the way of going about learning advocated by this British institution. Instead, most of them describe their understandings, and rejections of the dominant stories, emphasized through the dominant discourse, referring to history and power and political interests in the West. Interestingly, while describing about power issues most of the learners begin to

talk about British imperialism that seems to exist in terms of intellectual hegemony in Intercultural contexts of higher education in diverse ways.

I felt that these views of respondents can be succinctly portrayed by referring to Phillipson's quote from Galtung (1980:130, in Phillipson, 1992:57) which addresses cultural imperialism and scientific imperialism handed over through linguistic imperialism. He notes:

"...the Center always provides the teachers and the definition of what is worthy of being taught (from the gospels of the Christianity to the ...), and the periphery always provide the learners, then, there is a pattern of imperialism... a pattern of scientific teams from the Centre who go to Periphery nations to collect data (...)and theory formation (...). This takes place in the Centre universities (factories), in order to send the finished product, a journal...back for consumption in the Periphery, first having created a demand for it through demonstration effect, training in the Centre country... This parallel is not a joke, it is a structure."

Thus, some views, which highlight the power issues related to language imply that language acts as a major source that influence what and how learners learn in an intercultural learning situation. This predicament leads us to rethink about two issues. First, whose language narrates the dominant stories in the field of knowledge production? Second, who owns these dominant stories and who assess their significance? Hence, language seems obviously a critical issue empowered with political, intellectual as well as economic aspects of intercultural higher education.

In this chapter I explained some significant issues, which emerged through the meta-narratives of respondents, which illuminate the emergent major themes in doing this inquiry. First, it emerged that respondents' reflections shed light on different learner positioning in an intercultural pedagogic situation. Second, I discussed how these different positionings illuminate different versions of learner identity, epistemology and power in relation to learning in an intercultural context of higher education.

I feel it is important that I go back to the process of writing this thesis, reminding the reader of my focus of writing. First, I introduced my main quest in doing this inquiry and this was followed by a description of major concepts; concepts of culture and cultural scripts that frame the foundation for this thesis. From there, I moved on to examine other studies that are related to my main quest in this thesis, with the intention of widening my panoramas about what I am doing as well as adjusting my focus in the right direction. This discussion was followed by the process of constructing knowledge through active interviewing as well as the process of making sense out of the knowledge constructed during interviews situations. Addressing the main focus of this thesis I highlighted that emergent themes depicted different as well as similar cultural scripts in different cultures in terms of going about learning.

The next chapter is focused on the significant issues that emerged through the meta-narratives of the respondents.

Chapter 9: Implications and Limitations

This chapter discusses the significant and new knowledge that has been constructed in doing this inquiry, and its implications on teaching and learning in intercultural contexts. I frame this discussion around three main themes. I start the discussion reminding the reader of the main themes that emerged in doing this thesis. Second, I highlight implications of these themes in terms of the experience of learning in an intercultural higher education institute. Third, implications will be discussed for institutions of higher educations in relation to providing intercultural learning opportunities. Finally, I would describe the kind of limitations I encountered in doing this inquiry in terms of a thesis, produced for a PhD, within a limited period of time.

I begin by reminding the theories that emerged in living this inquiry.

9.1: Revisiting the Themes Emerged

“An American teacher at the foreign language institute in Beijing exclaimed in class ‘you lovely girls, I love you’. Her students were terrified” (Hofstede, 1986:301).

The themes that emerged in doing this inquiry can quite eloquently delineate why the learners in the Beijing Language Institution were terrified. Learning and teaching of course are not culturally neutral. The themes that emerged in this thesis suggest that there are different cultural scripts in terms of learning and these scripts vary across cultures. This thesis identified that there are different cultural scripts in different cultures in activities for learning; talking, writing, reading and thinking for learning as well as in role relations between teacher and student and student and student. Furthermore, the reflexive meta-narratives of the respondents provided explanations, illuminating these main themes emerged. These explanations delineated that different cultural scripts for learning in different cultures tell significant stories about diverse versions of learner identities, different interpretations of the nature

of epistemology and varying versions of power issues embedded in intercultural higher education.

It is noteworthy that the picture of variation emerged in doing this inquiry highlighted similarities in scripts for learning across cultures as well as differences. There were few similarities in cultural scripts for learning across cultures, in comparison to the differences. What is significant is that the pattern of variation identified in this thesis does not depict a simple dimension. Instead, the pattern emerged seems to be very complex, which leaves no space for easy interpretations.

There is one point worth mentioning at this stage. I use the word themes to describe the patterns that emerged in this thesis. One may ask, why themes? Where are the categories of patterns proved or discovered by this study? My answer is that the ontological and the epistemological stance I employed in doing this study did not lead to a categorical set of findings. Hence, I am not proposing any models or categories as my findings. Instead, I am talking about

emergent, richer themes that narrate new stories with complexity and significance.

Going back to the themes that emerged in doing this study, it seems that learners stepping into an experience of intercultural learning live more complicated narratives of learning, meandering between dual identities, believing in different versions of epistemology stories and feeling and experiencing power issues encapsulated in their learning process. This complexity directly informs the way the learners go about learning as well as their attitudes toward intercultural learning experience. Similarly, different cultural scripts for learning in different cultures and their relation to learner identity, epistemology and power issues in learning obviously tell important stories to institutions of higher education. Therefore, I next move onto tell the significant impact of the emergent themes on the intercultural learner as well as on the institutions which are engaged in intercultural higher education.

9. 1.1: Learner Identities

This discussion emphasizes how the experience of intercultural learning influences the existing cultural narratives of the learners, in relation to their learner identities. I organize this discussion highlighting the relationship among the learner identities, their varying notions of epistemology as well as their versions of power in relation to learning in an overseas university. I start with the identity issue in learning.

This thesis argues that identities of learners', who are learning in an intercultural context, do not seem to be static. There were narratives providing evidence that some learners go beyond the culturally available learner identities to create new identities when they encounter an intercultural learning experience. Nevertheless, they do not change their learner identities completely, or to an extent that they would give up their cultural narratives of being learners. What emerged was that most of the learners live dual identities in an intercultural learning situation. This highlights that the process of learning does not necessarily change merely because the learner encounters a new pedagogy.

Moreover, it emerged that some learners question the need for adopting new stories about learner identities. Even when they are prepared to change, they seem to question to which degree they require to change to survive an intercultural sojourn of learning. Therefore, one may emphasize that the teachers in intercultural universities can not expect that learners construct interculturally fluent identities, once they embark on a new experience of learning. This issue becomes quite noteworthy since, the construction of learner identities shapes how learners make sense of the ‘good learner’ as well as ‘effective learning’. As Cortazzi and Jin (1997) correctly note, the learners’ cultural identities are deep rooted, and some find that change of identity as a threat. Hence, helping the learners construct interculturally fluent identities is a culturally sensitive issue that requires understanding of cultural otherness of the learners’ who live different narratives of being learners.

9.1.2: Living Alternative Epistemologies

This study made it clear that learners bring different versions of epistemology to an encounter of learning. It further emerged that these versions do not resemble consistent levels of sophistication

since they are engaged in the process of reconstructing varying versions of the nature of epistemology, while experiencing an intercultural learning situation. This reconstruction process seems to have related to the kind of identity formation of learners during their intercultural learning experience. That means, the process of identity construction informs how the learners view the kind of epistemology they encounter in an intercultural learning experience.

This study argues that the learners, who are in the process of reflecting and reinterpreting new narratives of learning, or learner identities have more tendencies to move into constructivist versions of epistemology, whereas those, who cling to old narratives of self, seek absolute truth, and find it difficult in adjusting to new narratives of epistemology. Significantly, the learners who embrace new narratives of learning for the purpose of surviving the intercultural experience do not highlight the need to use the new way of going about learning on their return to home countries. And those who feel disempowered by the institutional narratives of learning seem to make sense of the power issues that embody an intercultural experience of learning, more strongly. The learners who suppress their native narratives of being learners have the

tendency to go back to their native practices of going about knowledge, irrespective of their attempt to suppress them. To a certain extent, these patterns resemble the findings of Tsai (1997) in relation to learner identity and their epistemological beliefs. Tsai claims that the learners with constructivist beliefs about knowledge tend to learn through constructivist oriented instructional activities. In this study I emphasize that identity formation of overseas learners and their views about the nature of epistemology are intertwined.

The significance of these issues tempts one to question whether the academics in intercultural higher education can expect overseas learners with diverse learner identities and different versions of epistemology to adjust and read a new pedagogic situation without complications. Even if they are able to read the new pedagogic situations it is important to see how far they can live these new pedagogies, during their short stay in an academic culture with different scripts.

Next, I move onto power issues and learning which emerged as another important theme in doing this thesis.

9. 1.3: History Repeated?

The theme of power embedded in learning, emerged as very significant in this inquiry. Issues of power are not ignored by the learners when they encounter a different pedagogic situation. They obviously reflect on their experience of learning in a British university as more than a process, through which they learn how to follow Western ways of learning. This study highlights that intercultural pedagogic situations encounter varying versions of power in relation to teacher-student relationship, use of English language and the process of constructing knowledge.

Starting with power issues related to construction of knowledge, and English language, the learners question the authorship and the ownership of the very pedagogy they experience in an intercultural learning situation. They are sensitive to the power issues related to knowledge transmission from Western universities to other parts of

the world and the monopoly they maintain in constructing knowledge to the rest of the world. Interestingly, it emerged that learners identify the power embedded in the English language as the tool of constructing knowledge as well as promoting the market for selling education. Moreover, the English language has been identified as the platform on which these Western universities construct intellectual as well as linguistic hegemony, since it has the status of an international language. Significantly, learners do not seem to accept international status of English as God given. Instead, they identify it as a consequence of particular political and economic history. Accordingly, learners refer to colonization as the main theme in the story of internationalization of English as a language. And they moreover, read the asymmetrical flow of knowledge from the Western universities to the rest of the world as a replication of imperialism. According to some respondents this is a kind of intellectual colonization.

I find that these views harmonize with Phillipson's (1992) ideas about the power of the English language experienced by the learners from periphery countries who learn abroad. In his terms,

the power embodied in English as a language, is a result of imperialism which is continued at present in different manners.

Owing to such understandings, the learners experiencing an intercultural learning situation do not seem to live the stories that are narrated by the institutions about learning. Instead, they question the power issues related to the stories the institutions tell and the stories they live. Rather than getting “assimilated” into the host culture of learning automatically, the learners seem to reflect critically on the act of learning and teaching in terms of power issues. Consequently, what the institutions expect as essential resources for learning are criticized by the learners as symbols of power. These versions of power, on the one hand, inform the degree to which the learners are willing to construct learner identities in contributing to knowledge construction in an overseas university. On the other hand, they invite the institutions to reconsider about their expectations about the expectations of learners who come overseas for higher studies.

In the meantime, it emerged that there are different versions of power issues related to teacher-student role relationship. Hence, the learners are not readily embracing the kind of relationship that is dominant between the learners and the teachers in the host university. The meanings learners bring to power relations between the teacher and the student directly inform their versions of construing knowledge as well as constructing learner identities. For instance, the learners who believe in moral authority in teacher-student relationship tend to believe that knowledge is given rather than constructed. They moreover, seem to cling to their old narratives in terms of constructing learner identities. In the meantime, the learners who come to the Institute from cultures where moral authority is dominant in teacher-student relationships seem to have different set of role expectations for teachers as well as learners. These expectations seem to shape their interaction with the teachers, communication and their overall behaviour as learners. These different ways of going about learning lead to easy labeling of international students in Western universities. This kind of labeling extends into various kinds of prejudices and misunderstandings between teachers and students as well as among peer students.

Furthermore, it emerged that the themes of different versions of identity, power and epistemology are intertwined. These versions do not stay static while experiencing a new pedagogic situation. In the meantime, issues of identity, power, and epistemology do not get changed in such an extent that one would lose his or her cultural version of any of these dynamics. The significance of these stories about epistemology, identity and power are of paramount significance since they shape the learners process of learning and their response to the new learning context. For instance, the learners' identity formations, beliefs about the nature of epistemology as well as power issues are intertwined and they inform each other in a complicated manner. All these three aspects together shape how the learners go about learning. The institution, with its specific nature of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment seem to stand somewhat aloof from the learners. Nevertheless, these institutional factors inform the process of learning as well as learner identity, their beliefs of epistemology and power issues. What is noteworthy here is that the relationship is asymmetrical; stories flow from the institution to the learner. One may say that this particular asymmetrical nature is another aspect of power that exists in an intercultural higher education context.

Thus, the themes that emerged in doing this thesis invite the teachers in intercultural higher educational contexts to rethink about the process of “assimilating” the overseas students into their ways of doing learning. They need to reconsider about their expectations of getting the overseas learner ‘adjusted’ to the new context. Is adjusting an overnight, culture free process in which the overseas learners can be injected with British ways of going about learning? Can the institutions feel comfortable regarding “adjusting” by mere provision of “in-duct” (ion) programmes and academic writing porgrammes?

Having implied these views, I now move on to discuss implications of these issues for intercultural higher education institutions.

9.1.4: Canaries in the Coalmine?

Discussing issues related to teaching international students, Carol and Ryan (2005) metaphorically refer to international students to canaries used by the minors to check air conditions in the coal mines. According to the writers, the international learners or the

canaries are important to Western university teachers, since the discomfort or the difficulties of the overseas learner can be exploited by the teachers to identify and overcome their predicament as teachers working in profit oriented business organizations.

Reflecting on the above metaphorical reference I thought that my respondents' narratives about the experience of learning in a Western university resonate with the predicament of the canaries. Accordingly, the teachers in the universities wait until the learners show signals of discomfort, inability to cope with the new University culture and then shape their teaching. This again seems another side of the coin of intellectual imperialism. On the one hand, it suggests that the differences encountered among international learners are defined as difficulties. On the other hand, it highlights that institutions expect that the international learners, once stepped in their Universities, will show signs of difficulties. This implies that learners from overseas are unable to face the difference they experience in a foreign University. Similar themes relating to university teachers' expectations and views regarding the overseas learner emerged in doing this thesis. I bring these themes

in to emphasize implications for institutions, who are engaged in intercultural higher education. These implications will address issues related to intercultural pedagogy, interaction for learning, assessment and curriculum issues. I find that these four aspects are intertwined in any experience of learning and hence, difficult to talk about in isolation. Therefore, I organize this discussion around all these four aspects.

Considering the pedagogy in the Institution of Education one may wonder whether England is the world and whether the world is culture free. The institution seems to imagine learning as quite a simple act, encapsulating one particular meaning irrespective of the contexts from where the learners come from and go back to. This imagination results in particular set of expectations on the part of the institution. Let us now talk about some such expectations and their repercussions on students' learning process.

9.1.5: Keeping Home behind

Learners who come from different cultures to learn in overseas universities bring their cultural ways of going about learning.

Hence, they can not be expected to act as cultural vacuums, once they step in a foreign university. Despite this factor, the institution of Education seems to expect that assimilation of learners from elsewhere in to British ways of going about learning occurs automatically, without any complications on the part of the learners. They seem to believe that the porgrammes of orientation, induction and academic writing themselves can do magic in turning a cultural other into British learning culture. This highlights the belief that cultural expectations for learning through out the world are similar. Hence, encountering of differences among learners can be interpreted as difficulties or deficits which create problems for individual teachers and the organizations. Significantly, these “problems” are interpreted in terms of the institutional code of conduct for learning and teaching. Thus, the institutions continue force-feeding the dominant stories of learning to all the learners regardless of the repercussions.

Significant characteristic of force-feeding British ways of doing learning is that it is asymmetrical. There is no evidence that the institution provides opportunities for learners to articulate their concerns in an intercultural learning context. Instead, the institution

frames its agendas basing on their assumptions and expectations regarding the act of learning and the learners from overseas. Thus, we find them organizing induction programmes and academic writing programmes imagining that these programmes would help assimilation of cultural others to British higher education. Just one simple example. The induction programmes in the Institute of Education give the impression that the learners come here with lots of problems and the generous institution is there to support these helpless creatures from somewhere. And then, the programmes for academic writing. According to evidence, these programmes clearly highlight the dominance of the dominance in intercultural learning contexts. According to the respondents these programmes tell the learners to follow the dominant stories about writing in the academic world without articulating why it is better. Moreover, the academic writing programmes are meant to develop the academic skills of those who are underdeveloped in their skills. Thus, these programmes are symbolic of the assumption that the overseas learners have a deficit and most significantly, the institution knows how to fix these problems. Once the problems are fixed the overseas learner is supposed to be interculturally competent. Hence, one may say that the British institutions of higher education are so

fantastic that they immerse the cultural others in to their culture of learning by conducting sympathetic programmes for those who come with a deficit.

Nevertheless, these “problematic” learners look at their predicament as learners in a British university in a different manner. Rejecting and challenging the difficult, deficit identity handed over by the institution the learners articulate that they seek reciprocal understanding about the differences between the host institution and themselves as learners. The learners find a lack of opportunities to address their views in the new learning environment and hence their discomfort remains disarticulated.

Moreover, it emerged that learners from different cultures do not act the role of obedient follower of dominant narratives of learning advocated by the institution as cultural vacuums. Instead, they question the “excellence” of education basically in terms of pedagogy they encounter in the new learning environment. They further rethink the applicability of the pedagogy they experience here, in a different culture. These issues invite the institutions

engaged in intercultural learning to reflect on their attitude about the overseas learners as “canaries” who supply predictions about the predicament of the institution, in the context of competitive inter-institutional bargain for a better market for international students. Instead, what is needed is an interculturally articulated, culturally inclusive pedagogy which reciprocally address the differences. Now the question is how pragmatic is an inclusive pedagogy in an intercultural learning context.

9.1.6: Tissue Rejection in culture Transplant?

Ryan (2000) highlights the need for understanding the cultural otherness of international students learning in Western universities. One significant way of addressing this complex issue may be to start with the idea of inclusive pedagogy. Issues related to pedagogy are intertwined with the curriculum. Of course, the notion of internationalization of curriculum seems currently on the agenda of most of the universities trying to widen the international market for education. What is this internationalized curriculum and how feasible is this notion? How can the Institute of Education and the learners feel and recognize any kind of internationalization in the

curriculum? Of course, this opens avenues for a long discussion and my intention is not to detail you about internationalization of curriculum. Instead, I highlight that this is a current need which should receive attention by the institutions engaged in intercultural higher education.

One noteworthy aspect is that the mere presence of international students in the classrooms will not make the curriculum intercultural. Instead, it seems a very complex process which demands transformation towards cultural diversity in diverse aspects of the institution. Starting from the institutional policy the process should influence the course contents, assessment, teaching and learning, resources as well as the attitude toward intercultural pedagogy. Bourdieu (1984) refers to the social and cultural knowledge the learners bring into learning situations as cultural capital and proposes that it can enrich the experience of learning. This thesis adds to Bourdieu's (1984) view and emphasizes that cultural capital as well as different cultural scripts for learning, diverse versions of epistemology and varying interpretations of identity together with power issues in learning can frame a firm platform on which the teachers and learners can build active

cultural dialogues for learning. These dialogues should give voice to diverse cultural narratives.

Similarly, class discussions and activities need to comprise alternative stories of learning rather than urging the overseas learners to suppress their cultural stories of learning. Expecting overseas learners to adapt to British ways of learning without at least giving any reasons for the need to change construct asymmetrical hierarchy. Instead, exploiting the encounter of difference to enrich the experience of teaching-learning through reciprocal understanding and sharing of cultural knowledge will prevent marginalization of cultural others. Academics need to make efforts to transcend their normal British cultural stories to read and feel the themes of alternative pedagogic stories. It seems important that both the students and the teachers consider critically distancing themselves from their normal cultural stories so that they can better read and understand the different others in learning. This involves much more than collecting information about how Asians rote learn. Instead, an interculturally developed pedagogy demands the teachers to make the “strange” “familiar” and the “familiar” “strange” so that they can accept the cultural others as resources

enriching a complex pedagogy which invites and appreciates diversity. A first step for this may be to look at teachers' own culture reflexively. And then they have to take some steps back from their own scripts for teaching and learning to penetrate deep into the different others. This kind of inventive initiative will obviously contribute to an illuminated intercultural pedagogy.

Nevertheless, the institutions can question the need and feasibility of changing their ways of doing education to meet the demands of diverse cultures the students bring in. Of course, they can continue to promote the global cultural dynamic perspectives (Le Tendre, 2000; Spindler and Spindler, 1987 in Le Tendre and Baker et al. 2001), highlighting that all cultures are responding to a global culture. This will just be replicating an aspect of their history, which has been referred to as intellectual hegemony by my respondents. That is the intellectually imperialistic pedagogy which advocates one dominant narrative for going about learning and teaching. This study highlights that this kind of pedagogy is being challenged by the overseas students. It further attests that force-feeding British culture of learning on students without acknowledging the impossibility of ever fully living the experiences

of other cultures can lead to rejection of the dominant stories. I feel Holliday's (1992:403) phrase 'tissue rejection' better articulates this situation. Holliday equates the predicament of cross-cultural transfer of training in English Language Teaching to the tissue rejection that takes place in medical operations, when tissue transplant fails due to different tissue types of the two persons involved in the transplant. In the same vein, I suggest that efforts of transplanting the dominant culture of learning on learners without understanding their ways of doing learning can result in tissue rejection.

Of course, expecting and trying to get the overseas learner assimilated into one particular pedagogy may occur naively and uninitiated as a result of institutions and academics acting without being context-conscious, imagining that cultural others will merge into their ways of doing learning without complications. This educational utopia helps widen the gap between the "strange" pedagogy and the "foreign" student. Consequently, the overseas learner paying a good bill to the registry will return home to tell new stories about intellectual colonization and excellence in selling

education which does not cater very much to the needs of the overseas customer.

Therefore, an inclusive pedagogy and culturally diversified curriculum seems a current requirement to meet the diverse demands of intercultural higher education. Thus, this thesis proposes that the institutions need to understand and welcome the cultural difference as a cultural and economic resource than a problem that challenges the smooth flow of the organization. Without waiting for the “canaries” to show signs of discomfort, institutions need to initiate understanding that pedagogies are not culture free. Therefore, they should initiate inventive, interculturally fluent human pedagogy which welcome cultural diversity.

Having suggested some significant implications in relation to addressing the themes that emerged in this thesis, I now move on to articulate particular noteworthy aspects in doing this inquiry to build up a thesis for a PhD.

9.2: Limitations

Before coming to a closure of narrating the story of doing this inquiry I will focus on certain issues which one may identify as limitations. I organize this discussion on three specific areas in this thesis; the context in which this inquiry was carried out, the methodology and the methods and the out comes of doing this inquiry.

Let us first turn to the context. Of course, the inquiry described in this thesis is based upon one particular context. That is the Institute of Education in the University of London in the UK. One may say that basing a study on one particular organization will limit the understanding of the researcher about the main quest in focus, thus, giving the reader a narrower picture of the particular study I am engaged in this inquiry. Of course, this critique is valid if one is emphasizing different kinds of purposes and approaches in doing research. My main focus here is set around the experiences of learners in an intercultural setting. I found that my choice of context, the Institute of Education can adequately address my purpose since it has an intercultural cohort of students.

In the meantime, one can suggest that if I collected stories from different disciplines of studies I may have added breadth to my inquiry by collecting varying stories about learning. Nevertheless, I collected diverse versions of the experience of learning by constructing stories with respondents belonging to one discipline. My emphasis is to collect rich and thick data improving the depth of the inquiry. Hence, I do not see the correlation between collecting many data from different disciplines and my purpose of doing this thesis.

Nevertheless, if I chose to collect data from different disciplines in different institutions there could have been different outcomes.

Second, aspects of methodology. Talking about the number of stories I managed to construct with the respondents or the sample, it is tempting to say that I should have collected more stories from more respondents to construct a better story about my inquiry. However, my ontological as well as the epistemological stances highlight that I am not sampling numbers but situations and I was using theoretical sampling to refine my data. Of course, those who

believe in grand narratives of doing research, sampling people, would find this somewhat awkward.

Then, my method of data collection. I used active interviewing as the method of collecting data. One may question how far interviews only can add to the believability of constructing knowledge. For instance, Richardson (1994: 452) quoting Burnett, (1986) and Rosenthal (1976) argues against some traditions of doing interviews as “*chats at the foot of the stairs’ with students ...informal discussions ‘over a beer’ with their teachers*”. He highlights that researchers should use standard instruments that do not depend on any direct personal contact with the respondents. Nevertheless, looking back at the process of my data collection and the process of assembling knowledge through interviewing I thought that Denzin and Lincoln (2003:10) make more sense when they note that “*no specific method or practice can be privileged over any other*”. And I add that any method and practice of research is privileged over another in terms of the purpose and the theoretical paradigm of a particular research. Thus, I highlight that use of active interviewing addressed my constructivist perspective very well in the process of constructing knowledge in this thesis.

Next, I discuss the use of grounded theory as the method of analyzing data. Grounded theory is normally associated with positivist approaches of constructing objective knowledge. Hence, its applicability is arguable in a naturalistic design informed by social constructivism. Therefore, I adjusted the basics of grounded theory to meet my epistemological stance and the version I used in restorying the stories in this inquiry is called constructivist grounded theory. Accordingly, I employed selective transcribing, and constant comparative method comparing categories with categories as well as interviews with interviews, recognizing that categories, concepts and theoretical level of analysis are emergent in my interaction and questioning with and about data. I emphasize that I did not wait until data speak for themselves as the original grounded theory prescribes. Also, the positivistic, objective nature of grounded theory was alternated by constructivist, reflexive approach throughout.

Finally, it is not impossible to question about my position as a researcher, and my location as another overseas student, who lives similar experiences of learning to those of my respondents. One may argue that my possibility of intruding easily into the

interpretations of my respondents' experience, while talking with them, and analyzing can enhance the subjectivity of my construction of knowledge. Of course, that is true, if I had not been able to retrospect reflexively about my self as well as the process of doing this inquiry, including data collection, and analyzing.

Having said that, I highlight that the knowledge constructed in this thesis, represents a slice of social life focusing on the experience of human learning, which is mediated by different cultural scripts, which explain varying versions of learner identity, nature of epistemology and issues of power in relation to a particular moment in a particular time in a selected context. I believe that this portrayal would help illuminate the construction of new and significant narratives about the experience of learning in higher education in intercultural contexts. In the meantime, this narrative can be used by other researchers, to develop more stories significant about aspects of higher education in intercultural contexts.

Proposing thus, I begin to finish narrating my portrayal of the passionately intellectual sojourn of doing this thesis in which I

was engaged in living, reliving and luxuriating in the pains and gains of constructing and co-constructing knowledge for three and half years.

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Appendix 1

Table of Interviewees

Pseudonym	Country	Level of Study
1. Abaz	Pakistan	MA
2. Ameena	Maldives	PhD
3. Anita	Italy	PhD
4. Azar	Pakistan	MA
5. Donald	Uganda	PhD
6. Freeda	Cyprus	MA
7. Gifti	Jamaica	MA
8. John	Kenya	MA
9. Jordan	Nigeria	MA
10.Kengi	Kenya	PhD
11.Lee	Hong-Kong	MA
12.Magi	France	MA
13.Maya	India	PhD
14.Meesha	Sudan	PhD
15.Merina	Mexico	PhD
16.Oliver	Malawi	MA

17.Pamela	Finland	MA
18.Pat	South Africa	PhD
19.Raju	Malaysia	MA
20.Rani	Mauritius	PhD
21.Rifca	Pakistan	MA
22.Roger	Ghana	PhD
23.Ronald	Korea	PhD
24.Saman	Sri Lanka	PhD
25.Seema	Brazil	PhD
26.Sheng-Yu	China	MA
27.Stella	Bulgaria	PhD
28.Veronica	Fiji	MA
29.Viola	Austria	MA
30.Yasin	Taiwan	MA

Appendix 2

Extracts from the Stories Constructed during the Interview

Conversations.

The stories constructed in the active interview situations are organized parts of the ongoing sequence of talk, which are jointly constructed by the interviewees and the researcher. The following two extracts from interview transcriptions provide examples for the kind of stories I constructed with the respondents during interview conversations.

(1) An extract from the transcription of the interview conversation with Lee, the student from Hong-Kong, doing his MA in Culture, Language and Communication. He works in an Arts Theater Company in Hong-Kong.

Lee: "...The idea of learning is to learn something which I am interested in. Back home, it is not my interest which is important when I chose a course. We do not have many options in terms of subjects like here. Whatever course I chose I am not happy at the end. You know why? I do not think that the individual needs as well as the individual differences are taken into account. Here, the teachers do not treat you like a thief. They are quite

relaxed when you say that you can not understand or do something. The teachers are more flexible about the learners. Is it the same in your system of education?”

T: “Oh... in my system? No. I think in my culture, we follow a routine in relation to education, both in the schools and in the universities. Our teachers are not this flexible. We have things like ethics, morals, code of conduct... which are very important in teaching and learning. I think they make the process of learning as well as teaching very rigid” Do you find the situation different in your culture?”

Lee: “Aaa...h, back home, we have big Chinese families and we are trained to follow the adults and their authority. Difficult to go against the adults. Normally, the adults decide, and others listen. These qualities are transferred from the family to other social institutions like schools and universities. You know, in our universities we are not allowed to eat apples. If you eat, the teacher says ‘Do (w) n’t eat apples in the class’. We do not take even drinks to the classroom. You see, discipline is a big word in our education. We do not argue with the teachers as they do it here.”

T: "You said no arguments in the classroom?"

Lee: "Here, the teachers encourage us to talk and give our opinions and we can work at our pace. The teacher is the most important person in the classroom. You can ask questions and argue with the teacher. They are not going to punish you for that. But, back home, the students are passive. Most of the time, we wait for the information to come from the teacher. Here it is the job of the learner. There, we think, I am here. So teach me. I am listening. We always wait to be fed by the teacher. Teacher gives us all the knowledge. We are good listeners. We have been trained as slaves to be obedient. In my culture we are trained to listen to adults and parents. No questions. This transfers into school and then to the university. Arguing with the teacher is not a good thing. Never do that. He knows everything. But, look, here the teachers are not treating you like a thief. They will listen to you and you are relaxed. Back home, remember, no critical arguments. What arguments? No. No. You can not argue with the teacher. You know one thing? We were colonized by the British for so many years. The British pointed at our people and got the work done in the way they want. So, we are a culture of obedience. Good followers. We have the feeling of slavery in the classroom. Not much freedom to argue or say our opinion. We have been

under the British and had no freedom to argue. Inside the classrooms, we are just obedient listeners” (interview; Lee, 11.01.05).

(2) An extract from the interview conversation with Kengi, the university teacher from Kenya, doing her PhD in the Institute of Education.

Kengi: “Let me tell you something. I always feel like an African woman wherever I go. I had some experience here. You know what? At the beginning, when I was doing my MA in this Institute, very often, the teachers did not see me. They never noticed the Black woman sitting in the corner. So I was afraid of talking. Culture matters in everything. In talking, in the way we dress, what we read and all. I talk English differently. I was afraid to talk. The teachers never saw me. Never. I experienced it here. What about you? Did you find that you are different or being treated differently?”

T: “Well... Of course... in certain ways. As you mentioned we also speak English with a Sri Lankan accent and do certain things in relation to learning in our way. You know what I mean. Any way, I can not exactly remember an occasion where I felt I am being treated differently in the way you meant. And like you, I was also quiet during class discussions.”

K: “Oh yes, I never could talk during class discussions. Even after becoming a PhD student I was extremely shut down. I never talked even last year. Only now I am talking. Those days I was so afraid of the teachers and the other students. I thought ‘what would they say if I talk’. Every discourse was different and strange to me.”

T: “Afraid of the teachers?”

Kengi: “What I mean was that the teachers were not very inviting. They do not want to wait until we finish saying something. They will always go with those who can talk fast, who talk always. Some, who can talk, go on talking. And the lessons do not give much. The students are just cycling around what they already know. There is no input from the teacher. One student can silence all the others and still the teacher will just let it go. But back home, in my classes, the students are encouraged to talk. But they have to talk sense. They should know what they are talking and should not shout like this. They are very critical as well. It does not mean that my students can go on just talking. As the teacher I give them a lot. I am responsible for what they learn and do not learn as their teacher. Then, after that they can raise their points. You see, in our culture we never just wait leaving the class in

the hands of few students who are ready to talk. Learning is not shouting”
(interview; Kengi 07.06.05).